





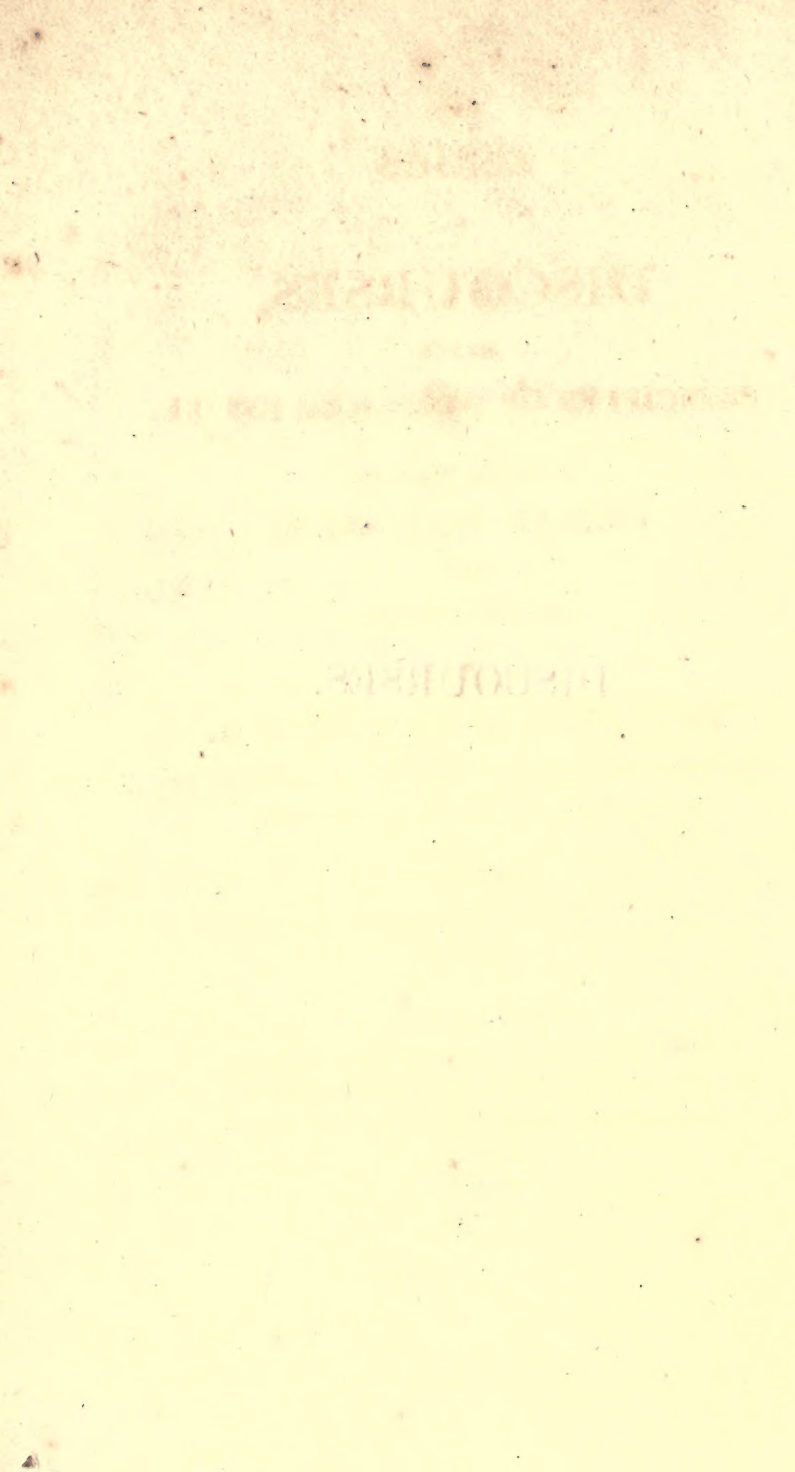








DISCOURSES.



**SERIES**  
**OF**  
**DISCOURSES,**  
**ON THE**  
**PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF,**  
**AS CONNECTED WITH**  
**HUMAN HAPPINESS**  
**AND**  
**IMPROVEMENT.**

**BY**  
**THE REV. R. MOREHEAD, A. M.**  
**OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD; JUNIOR MINISTER OF THE**  
**EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, COWGATE, EDINBURGH.**

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**VOLUME SECOND.**

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**1816.**

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SERIES

DISCOURSES

OF THE

FACTS OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY

AND

THEIR CAUSES

AND

THEIR REMEDIES

BY

JOHN W. ALLEN, D.D.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO: PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1892

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TO  
THE RIGHT REVEREND  
**JOHN PARSONS, D. D.**

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,  
MASTER OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
&c. &c. &c.

THIS  
VOLUME

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY ONE  
WHO LONG HAD OCCASION TO ADMIRE,  
WHEN THEY ADORNED HIS VIRTUES  
IN THE  
RETIREMENT OF ACADEMICAL LIFE,  
THE VIGOUR OF MIND, THE TALENTS, AND THE LEARNING,  
WHICH NOW SHINE WITH INCREASED LUSTRE,  
IN THAT MORE CONSPICUOUS STATION  
TO WHICH  
THEY HAVE SINCE SO DESERVEDLY  
CONDUCTED HIM.

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN PARSONS, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,

MASTERS OF BALLIO COLLEGE, OXFORD

&c. &c. &c.

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WHEN THEY ADORNED HIS VIRTUES

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THEY HAVE SINCE SO FAVORABLY

CONDUCTED HIM.



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# DISCOURSE I.

ON THE CHARACTERS OF RELIGION IN THE  
PRESENT AGE. \*

---

MARK, i. 1.

*“ The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus  
“ Christ, the Son of God.”*

WE have again, my brethren, reached that season, when our attention is in a more peculiar manner directed to the consideration of the evidences and the history of our religion. It is the wisdom of our church every year to call our thoughts to meditation on these subjects,

\* Preached on the first Sunday in Advent 1811.

and, to those who can appreciate them rightly, none can afford more interesting or improving reflections.

We are, perhaps, too much in the habit of considering Christianity as something quite detached from every other human interest, or concern ; and while we build upon it our faith in a future state of existence, we yet seldom examine its story and character with that ardent curiosity with which we commonly investigate the political condition of mankind, either in our own, or in distant times. Besides, however, its influence on moral conduct and religious belief, the study of our religion opens to our contemplation the most singular train of events which has taken place in the progress of the world, and which, more than any other, has had a lasting influence on the fortunes and the temper of nations.

When we look to its origin, indeed, we

discover but little, from which, the consequences that have followed, could well have been predicted. To those who are accustomed to inquire into the complicated apparatus of human policy, and to trace its effects upon the fate of mankind, there will appear something very unpromising in the simple characters and lives of our Lord and his Disciples. This very circumstance, however, is particularly interesting to every well-constituted mind ; and it must be refreshing, at least, to turn away our thoughts, for a time, from the dark picture which the events of our own age so constantly obtrude upon them,—from the proud and cheerless aspect of worldly ambition and aggrandisement, to those humble scenes, which, amidst all their mighty consequences on the happiness of the human race, both in the present and in a future state of existence, were yet transacted in the huts of fishermen, and

among the most unostentatious of the sons of men.

The history of our religion is preserved, as you know, in four short narratives, which have ever been regarded as the composition of men who were themselves eye-witnesses to the facts which they relate, or at least were the companions of those who had witnessed them. They are written in a strain of remarkable simplicity, and with all the internal appearances of truth ; nor I suppose would any doubts have ever been started against their authenticity, did they not, along with the more natural incidents, contain an account, likewise, of certain miraculous occurrences, which “ the reasoning pride ” of some ambitious philosophers has represented as unworthy the belief of an enlightened understanding. Upon this subject I shall hereafter have occasion to make some observations ; but, in the



mean time, it may be sufficient to say, that if we are ever prepared to expect a particular revelation of the Divine will, we should likewise be prepared for something miraculous in its history, since the very circumstance of such a revelation is a miracle in itself.

There cannot, surely, be any method so good of acquiring an acquaintance with the origin, the evidences, the nature, and the doctrines of Christianity, as in studying with attention those invaluable records in which these particulars are detailed; and, accordingly, it has always been considered as one of the most important duties of a Christian teacher, to illustrate the obscurities, and to bring forward the more important circumstances in these sacred books. The Gospel of St Matthew has in this manner been commented upon by a late very eminent Prelate, and I doubt not, that, from

his pure and Christian instruction, many of you have derived, both for yourselves and for your children, very valuable principles both of faith and of conduct. In humble imitation of this excellent model, it is my intention to deliver from this place, during the season of Advent, and occasionally in the course of the ensuing year, lectures on a similar plan, on the Gospel next in order, that of St Mark: and if, in the inquiries into which I shall thus be led, it may not be in my power to add any thing of great importance to the information of my elder hearers, I yet hope that I shall be enabled to say something which may seize upon the attention of the young; and, at that dangerous period when sophistry is beginning to perplex them with its delusions, and pleasure to allure them with its charms, may, under the influence of Divine Grace, tend to assure them, that the

true honour and happiness of human life can spring only from the faith and the practice of the Christian.

Before entering directly upon my subject, it may not be unimportant to take notice of certain peculiarities of opinion and temper, which prevail very generally at present with regard to the Gospel. At the period when the Lectures on St Matthew, already alluded to, were composed, a very fatal spirit of infidelity had spread itself over the Christian world; and, not confined to the higher and more licentious orders of men, it had even crept into the retirement of the cottage, and was threatening to blight all the hopes, and to wither the virtues, of the human race. To counteract this destructive spirit, which had been aided, alas ! in its progress, by men whose abilities and endowments seemed to call them to far nobler offices, was the chief

object proposed by the venerable author of that publication; and much good was certainly effected by his labours, and those of his coadjutors in the same field of honourable exertion. Lessons, however, of still greater efficacy have since been collected from the course of human affairs; and a voice more eloquent than “the tongues of men and of angels,” has been heard amidst the storms that have agitated the world. The rich and the powerful have at length seen the danger of unhinging those principles on which the stability of society depends; and the poor have found nothing but additional wretchedness, in the fancied illumination which seemed to be opening upon them. The progress of infidelity has consequently been arrested, and the spirit of its apostles either converted or subdued. There are few men who are now desirous to keep it alive. They who have them-

selves but little religion, are yet ashamed of a cause which has been rendered familiar to the lowest and most illiterate; and accordingly, the ingenious writers of the present day seldom venture to indulge in any liberties with revelation, which, at no distant period, was one of the common topics upon which fashionable ridicule was displayed. The better description of men among those whose religious opinions were then unfortunately perverted, have now, I am persuaded, no feeling of vanity in their emancipation from what they once supposed to be mere vulgar opinion,—but would very willingly return again to the simple creed of their fathers.

In this state of things, my brethren, it is unnecessary, I apprehend, to make elaborate replies to the cavils and the calumnies of the unbeliever. It is almost sufficient, without making the sup-



position that systematic and professed infidelity has ever existed in the world, to state, with clearness and simplicity, the grounds upon which Christian faith is founded, and except, perhaps, among a few young persons whose minds are caught with the free aspect of sceptical opinions, or among some individuals of corrupt lives, we shall find men, for the most part, rather willing to be convinced of religious truth, than carried away by any prejudice against it. The effect, however, of the spirit of infidelity which prevailed so long, has been, I believe, to render them, but too often, little acquainted with the real nature and grounds of the Gospel. They rather think it true, and wish it to be true; but they do not see very well what are the reasons for belief, and often do not know what it is they are to believe. To meet this state of the public mind, all controversy ought,

as much as possible, to be avoided; the most simple and natural views only of revealed truth, to be adduced; its importance to be made sensible to the feelings of every individual, and brought home to "men's business and bosoms."

While the world, in general, have thus, perhaps, become in some degree unacquainted with the true nature of religion, in consequence of the long triumph of infidelity, there have arisen, probably from the same source, two other peculiarities of very opposite characters. Many men, shocked with the open deformity of profaneness, have formed to themselves a system of Christianity which seems to wage war with all our most natural feelings. Seizing upon certain views of Scripture, to which they confine their whole attention, they seem to think that man, as he comes out of the hands of nature, is solely detestable and wicked;

that none of our affections or principles of conduct are at all to be approved of, unless they can stand the test of their peculiar dogmas; and, forgetting that the Gospel is a religion of liberty, they narrow and depress all the vigour of the human understanding, and throw a melancholy cloud over all the images of faith. As long as this spirit prevails, (and it seems to be making no inconsiderable progress,) Religion cannot be hailed as the friend and companion of man,—as his affectionate guide through the dangers and snares of his way; but she will rather seem to be the cruel task-mistress, who drives him forward with her unrelenting lash. With the view, therefore, of fixing religion upon a right basis, nothing is of more importance than to point out those aspects of the Gospel which are animating and ennobling to human nature; and, surely, it is impossible to study

with attention, and without some unfortunate bias, the mild and unaffected tenor of the sacred history, and not, at the same time, to see that the utmost purity is consistent with the most entire absence of austerity; and that it is much less in severe doctrine, than in holy, gentle, and charitable affections, that the true spirit of Christianity consists.

There is yet, my brethren, another peculiarity of a very different kind, which has no small influence on the character of religion in the present age. While, from a horror at licentiousness and infidelity, one description of men have thus entrenched themselves among the darkest and most thorny doctrines that have ever been engrafted on the Christian system—others have thought, that the only way of rendering Revelation acceptable to men of enlightened and liberal views, was to strip it of every

thing that is at all impenetrable to human reason ; and in so doing, they have indeed but too often “ laid the “ axe unto the root of the tree,” and have not scrupled to hew down, indiscriminately, what have been accounted, in all ages, the most fundamental truths of the Gospel. It is certainly not to be desired, that any obstacle should be put to the freedom of inquiry ; and of this we may be well assured, that all opinions which are not built upon the basis of truth will ultimately fall ; but there is a pertinacity and narrow-minded dogmatism, frequently, among those who account themselves the only enlightened Christians, which is equally remote from the humility of the Gospel, and from the true character of philosophical research ; and which, more than any other temper of mind, is adverse to the discovery of truth. This mode of investigation must not, there-



fore, pass without reprehension ; and he who really wishes to discover what Christianity is, ought to raise his mind above the littleness of controversial petulance, and the “ oppositions of science, falsely “ so called.”

Keeping in view, then, these peculiarities of the times in which we live, I shall make it my object, in the following discourses, to state, with as much plainness as I can, some of the leading evidences of the Gospel, without entering into any minute examination of the objections which have been made to them. I shall endeavour, in particular, to point out the importance of its doctrines and its precepts ; and I trust it will sufficiently appear, even from the imperfect observations which I can hope to make, that while, on the one hand, Christianity is a system above the device of mere human wisdom, and containing principles which man of his own

accord could never have reached,—it is, on the other hand, a perpetual spring of light and joy, and, so far from imposing fetters on the natural play of his powers and affections, is the vital fire which gives them energy and activity.

The day is at hand, my brethren, on which the first rays of this beneficent light broke upon the darkness of the world, awakening in their rise the songs of Angels, and destined to enlighten in their progress the eye-balls of the blind,—to penetrate the dungeon of the captive, and to animate the labours of the poor,—that day which marks “the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” You are preparing, on that blessed day, to encircle the altar of this mighty Saviour, and have prayed for the grace of his Spirit, that you may “cast away the works of darkness, and put upon you the armour of light.” “Wherefore, take unto you

“ the whole armour of God, having your  
“ loins girt about with truth, and having  
“ on the breast-plate of righteousness, and  
“ your feet shod with the preparation of  
“ the Gospel of peace : praying always  
“ with all prayer and supplication in the  
“ spirit—for me also, that utterance may  
“ be given unto me to make known  
“ the mystery of the Gospel, that there-  
“ in I may speak boldly, as I ought to  
“ speak.”

## DISCOURSE II.

ON PROPHECY. \*

---

MARK, i. 2.

*“ As it is written in the prophets, Behold  
“ I send my Messenger before thy face,  
“ which shall prepare thy way before  
“ thee.”*

THE Gospel of St Mark, upon the consideration of which I am now to enter, contains a very short summary of our Lord's history, omitting, for the most part, those circumstances, the relation of which is not of

\* Preached in Advent.

paramount importance. In this view the Evangelist enters at once upon the ministry of Christ, and passes over all those interesting incidents of his birth and early life, which are preserved in the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke. He does not, however, omit to mention that remarkable person who is introduced by all the Evangelists, and whose previous mission seems to have been of peculiar efficacy in "preparing the way of the Lord." This preacher of repentance had been foreseen by the ancient prophets, and accordingly St Mark points him out to us, with great dignity, as coming to fulfil the character which they had assigned him. "As it is written in the Prophets, Behold  
"I send my Messenger before thy face,  
"which shall prepare thy way before  
"thee. The voice of one crying in the  
"wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the  
"Lord; make his paths straight. John



“ did baptize in the wilderness; and  
“ preach the baptism of repentance for  
“ the remission of sins.”

In these words we are, first of all, introduced into that lofty system of prophecy, which, from the beginning of the history of man, had been employed in different forms, and with different degrees of illumination, to shadow out those important events which were now to be transacted in the world. It is customary, as you know, with the Evangelists to mark the coincidences between the predictions of the Prophets and the events which they record. These are frequently so striking that it is impossible to elude their force; and if, on other occasions, we are little affected by them, the reason perhaps may be, that our previous acquaintance with the facts, renders us less attentive to those nice shades of coincidence which must have been peculiarly interesting to those

who had first studied the predictions, and were anxiously looking for their accomplishment. From this circumstance, however, it may happen, that a direct proof of the truth of Christianity, from the evidence of prophecy, may have a comparatively feeble influence on the minds of men in the present age ; and, while it is certainly to those who will examine it, an argument of great weight, yet it may not be less generally useful to consider prophecy in a more indirect view, by inquiring into other purposes which it has answered in carrying on the great scheme of Revelation.

It is to this last view, my brethren, that I propose at present to lead your attention ; but, before proceeding to it, I trust that I shall be pardoned, if I venture to state to you the direct argument from prophecy, in words which, although they must be familiar to you all, I am

yet tempted to introduce here, as they supply the defect in my own argument, in a manner so infinitely superior to anything which I could ever hope to accomplish for myself. “I cannot presume,” says a great master of moral and religious wisdom, “in the limits of a single discourse, to speak to you of all the extraordinary evidence upon this subject which arises from the minute and precise correspondence of all ‘the signs and types, and figurative meanings,’ in which the dispensation of the Gospel fulfils the introductory dispensation of the Mosaic law. I presume to remind you only of the leading and prominent facts, which every age has known, and which the present hour verifies. It was foretold by the lawgiver of the Jews, that a greater than he was to come,—and a greater than he has come. It was foretold that this mighty Saviour

“ ‘ was to be despised and rejected of his  
“ own people, a man of sorrows, and ac-  
“ quainted with grief.’ That Saviour has  
“ come, to be rejected and despised,—  
“ to be, in truth, a man of sorrows, and  
“ acquainted with grief. It was foretold  
“ that Jerusalem was to be destroyed  
“ when this great event arose;—and when  
“ this great event arose, Jerusalem was  
“ destroyed. It was foretold that the  
“ light of Heaven was to arise upon the  
“ Gentile world;—and upon the Gentile  
“ world (and upon us, in the mercy of  
“ God) that light has arisen. It was fore-  
“ told that the Jewish people was then to  
“ be dissolved, ‘ that they were to be  
“ strangers and wanderers in every land,’  
“ until some future day of repentance  
“ and of pardon;—and, in this hour, the  
“ Jewish people are strangers and wan-  
“ derers in every country upon earth.  
“ To this weight and consent of evidence,”



he continues, " I have nothing to add.  
" The characters of the religion of the  
" Jews are in themselves irreconcilable  
" with every common principle of hu-  
" man nature, and must therefore be re-  
" ferred to some higher wisdom and fore-  
" sight than that of man. But, when all  
" the prophecies of this extraordinary re-  
" ligion are found to be accomplished,—  
" when, resting solely upon the future,  
" all that they predict of that future has  
" really taken place ;—when all point to a  
" final and greater revelation, and when  
" all the circumstances of that greater re-  
" velation correspond fully to the predic-  
" tions of earlier time, the conclusion is  
" inevitable,—that the Saviour whom we  
" worship is ' He that should come, and  
" that we ought to look for no other.' "

On this passage, my brethren, which is far above my praise, I will not venture to make any comment, but, leaving it to



produce its own effect upon your minds, I proceed, in prosecution of the humbler view which I have suggested, to remark, in the first place, that the supposition of a series of prophetic discoveries, such as we have recorded in Scripture, gives to revelation a character of much grandeur and dignity. When we find, that, from the first hour in which man stood in need of a Redeemer, his future arrival was foretold, and that, not only in the occasional raptures of the pious, his "day was seen," but even in the institutions of a whole nation, the purposes of his coming were shadowed out in types and signs ; when, in the progress of this mighty preparation, we behold a continued succession of inspired men, who employed all the powers of their elevated minds to raise the thoughts of a grovelling people from the signs to the things signified, from the letter to the spirit of their rites and or-

dinances, describing, at times, with all the vivacity of actual vision, events which were not to arrive for many an age :—it is impossible not to feel the lofty character of that religion which was ushered in with so much previous arrangement.

When it came, indeed, into open view, it seemed to be of a very humble and unimposing aspect; and it is not to be wondered at, that the gross minds of the people among whom it rose, should have found little in it to satisfy their earthly ambition, and that they should have closed their eyes to the import of those predictions which painted the sufferings of the promised Messiah. Yet, however mean his apparent condition, never was any prince preceded by so splendid a train of forerunners; and, surely, there was more real grandeur in the constant preparation which, from the first opening of the history of man, had been made for his

approach, than if he had come at last with the ensigns of worldly power, and amidst the glitter of a temporal sovereignty.

In the second place, my brethren, the dispensation of prophecy is no less conspicuous for its benevolence than for its splendour; and it is impossible for us to calculate the amount of that hope and faith which it was the means of producing in those ages that preceded the Gospel. It is a very low and illiberal view of the dispensations of Heaven, to consider them always with a reference to ourselves, and if they should happen not to be very interesting to us, immediately to conclude, that they were of little value in former periods of society. The full light of the Gospel has now come in place of the fainter illumination of prophecy, and the ancient predictions seem now only valuable, as they prove the divine origin of

that scheme which was foretold by them: but at the period at which they were made, they served an higher, and a still nobler purpose. They were, then, a substitute for the Gospel. They, then, gave to the simple and pious heart, its best assurances of the moral administration and providence of God. Under the bondage of the Mosaic institutions, they anticipated the perfection of Christian liberty: they addressed the “prisoners of hope,”—and pointed to the “stronghold to which they “should turn,”—and spoke of that future age in which “the daughter of Zion “should rejoice greatly.”

How many virtuous individuals, as well as the Ethiopian who was baptized by Philip, would, when they went to Jerusalem to worship, derive consolation, amidst the obscurity of the services in which they were engaged, from the divine raptures of the Prophet Esaias; and although, like him,



they could not tell of whom the Prophet spake, they would yet be comforted with the sublime thought that *one* was to come, who should “raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel,” who was to be given “as a light even to the Gentiles, and who should carry salvation unto the ends of the earth!” “Your father Abraham himself,” says our Saviour to the Jews, “rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.”

There is yet a third observation, which may shew the importance of Prophecy in animating the hopes of the pious even since the introduction of the Gospel. From the fulfilment of those prophecies which refer to that great event, it is reasonable for us to conclude, that all connected prophecies will be fulfilled, and, even under the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness himself, the clouds which



sit upon human affairs are sufficiently deep and portentous to make us rejoice in that additional light which Prophecy has kindled. Powerful as are the hopes and consolations of the Gospel, the faith of the righteous is yet, at times, in danger of being shaken by the disorderly appearances around them; and when they behold the triumph of successful crime, and nations themselves subjected to the caprices of individual ambition, they are apt to forego their trust in a superintending providence, and to fear that some dark fatality governs the world.

The book of Prophecy, my brethren, dispels these gloomy apprehensions. Amidst the storms of the moral world, we there behold the hand which restrains and guides them. We see an omnipotent Lord, under whose direction, even the crimes of men are converted into the means of accomplishing greater ultimate

good. We perceive, indeed, the rage and the tumult of human power; but we are, at the same, time made acquainted with ONE who “knoweth its “going out, and its coming in, whose “bridle is in its lips, and who can turn “it back by the way by which it came:” and, as the final issue of human affairs, we are presented with those pictures of infinite beauty which describe the universal triumph of the Gospel, when “the “earth shall be full of the knowledge of “the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;” when “violence shall no more be heard “in the land, wasting nor destruction “within its borders;” when “the people “also shall be all righteous:” and when, “as the earth bringing forth her bud, and “the garden causeth the things that are “sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord “God will cause righteousness and praise “to spring forth before all nations.”

Notwithstanding the imperfection of these observations, I trust it will yet appear from them, that, without examining closely the coincidence between particular predictions and events, we may draw an indirect inference in favour of Christianity, from contemplating the grandeur of that scheme of Prophecy upon which it is founded; the benevolence with which this dispensation supplied the defects of those religious systems which preceded the Gospel; and the animating hopes which it still awakens, amidst the inevitable darkness and disorders of the world. We shall thus discover, in many interesting points of view, the connection between the Prophetical and the Christian dispensations—that they form indeed but one system, extending from the beginning to the end of time, and corresponding in its progress, with admirable wisdom and benevolence, to all the varying

circumstances in the condition of human nature.

In opposition to the direct argument from Prophecy, the most plausible objection that can be urged, probably, is, that the people among whom the predictions of the Prophets were made, and who, therefore, may be supposed most able to interpret them, have never admitted the soundness of that interpretation which we have given them. But it may be remarked in reply—that at least the genuineness of the predictions themselves is undoubted, from their existing in the hands of those who are the greatest enemies to the Gospel,—that the prejudices of that people have, for obvious reasons, ever been peculiarly strong against the Christian interpretation of their prophecies—and what, perhaps, is a more striking fact still, that none of the prophecies are more clear and explicit



than those in which the conduct of that very people, and their present unexampl'd condition, are described. "Behold," says their great Lawgiver, "all these  
" curses shall come upon thee, and shall  
" pursue thee, because thou hearkenedst  
" not unto the voice of the Lord thy God:  
" and they shall be upon thee for a sign  
" and for a wonder, and upon thy seed  
" for ever. The Lord shall bring a na-  
" tion against thee from far, from the end  
" of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth  
" —a nation whose tongue thou shalt not  
" understand: and he shall besiege thee  
" in all thy gates, until thy high and  
" fenced walls come down: and thou shalt  
" eat the fruit of thine own body, the  
" flesh of thy sons and thy daughters in  
" the siege; and in the straitness where-  
" with thine enemies shall distress thee:  
" and ye shall be left few in number,  
" whereas ye were as the stars of heaven



“ in multitude; and the Lord shall scatter  
“ thee among all people, from the one  
“ end of the earth, even unto the other :  
“ and among these nations shalt thou  
“ find no ease, neither shall the sole of  
“ thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall  
“ give thee there a trembling heart, and  
“ failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.”

As a counterpart to this prophetic denunciation, which has been in every particular so awfully fulfilled, I shall quote, in conclusion, that beautiful passage from Isaiah, in which the prediction that has given rise to the preceding observations is contained, and which, proclaiming the advent of the Messiah, speaks, at the same time, of the loving kindness of his righteous and impartial reign.

“ Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,  
“ saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto  
“ her that her warfare is accomplished,

“ that her iniquity is pardoned : for she  
“ hath received of the Lord’s hand dou-  
“ ble for all her sins. The voice of  
“ him that crieth in the wilderness,  
“ Prepare ye the way of the Lord—make  
“ straight in the desert a high way for our  
“ God. Every valley shall be exalted,  
“ and every mountain and hill shall be  
“ made low : and the crooked shall be  
“ made straight, and the rough places  
“ plain. And the glory of the Lord shall  
“ be revealed, and all flesh shall see it to-  
“ gether : for the mouth of the Lord hath  
“ spoken it. O Zion, that bringest good  
“ tidings, get thee up into the high moun-  
“ tain : O Jerusalem, that bringest good  
“ tidings, lift up thy voice with strength :  
“ lift it up, be not afraid ; say unto the  
“ cities of Judah, behold your God.”

## DISCOURSE III.

ON THE PREACHING OF JOHN. \*

MARK, i. 3, 4.

*“ The voice of one crying in the wilder-  
“ ness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,  
“ make his paths straight. John did  
“ baptize in the wilderness, and preach  
“ the baptism of repentance, for the re-  
“ mission of sins.”*

IN a former discourse I had occasion to make some observations on that system of Prophecy, which existed in its perfect form among the Jews alone, and was in-

\* Preached in Advent.

corporated, indeed, with every rite and ceremony of that singular people. We are not, however, to suppose, that no rays of this benevolent light were scattered over the Gentile world, and that, amidst the deep darkness which hung over the nations, there were not prophetic intimations of something better to arrive. In this view, as incomplete in themselves, and as ready to give way to some system of greater perfection, the religious tenets, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, are principally to be contemplated. The former originated immediately from divine inspiration, and were formed into a regular and harmonious scheme,—the latter were the rude productions of human nature left to itself, or enlightened only by short and partial glimpses of divine truth,—yet both were the schools in which the infancy of the world was reared,—in both

the altar, the priest, and the sacrifice, pointed to loftier views, which were then but inadequately conceived ; and not only in the raptures of prophecy, but in the contemplations of uninspired wisdom, every voice was listened to which seemed to proclaim the approach of one mighty to instruct and to save.

It is from this circumstance that, in the tone of ancient wisdom, we frequently discover a character of thought infinitely superior to much of what has been termed philosophy, in the present age. The wisest men of antiquity felt the darkness which surrounded them, and their own inability to explore it ; yet they reposed with humble hope on that Divine Providence which had not left itself without a witness, and looked forward to that hour when the “ day should dawn, and the day-star arise “ in their hearts.” In this glorious expectation, they were even inclined for the



time to reverence the superstitions of their age, and to believe that, amidst all their seeming absurdities, they yet involved some secret links of communication with Heaven.—How different, alas! the disposition of those who have, in our time, claimed to be the lights of the world! They have too often vainly imagined that their own unassisted powers were equal to discover the secrets of divine wisdom, and have presumptuously rejected those intimations from above, which sought to guide them into “the way of the Lord.” Instead of being willing to trace the footsteps of a heavenly instructor, amidst the religious institutions in which their infancy was reared, they have set themselves at once in opposition to every form of established faith, and without even the hope of raising any thing in their room, have attempted to level with

the ground the most venerable fabrics of Religion !

The Evangelist now proceeds to make us acquainted with that holy teacher, whom the Prophets had foretold as about to precede the Messiah.—“John,” says he, “did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins, and he did eat locusts and wild honey : and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I, after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.”

The religion of the Jews had, for a

long time, degenerated into the mere observance of rites and ceremonies, and was, in this view, almost as little able as the heathen superstitions themselves to satisfy the longing desires of the human heart. One of the constant endeavours of the inspired Prophets had been, to guard their religious system against this tendency to degenerate ; but when that order of men had ceased, both the priests and the people seem equally to have lost sight of the whole spirit of their creed. A corruption of this nature might indeed go on for a length of time: men might be pleased with the delusion that they could keep their sins, if they would only perform some stated rites of expiation ; but when such a notion had been long prevalent, the state of public manners must at last have become so offensively vicious, and conscience must all the while have been so uneasy under the cheat, that it is not surprising, when

a better and truer view was presented, it should have been hailed with the utmost eagerness, and almost looked upon as a discovery of something quite unheard of and unknown.

“John preached the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins,”—a doctrine, it would seem, sufficiently simple and obvious,—yet there was something in it so unlike the religious instruction of that age, that it appears to have immediately excited a deep interest in the Jewish people;—of a similar kind, perhaps, with that eagerness with which the first preaching of the Protestant Reformation was received, when the corruptions of the Church of Rome had reached their height. After the dark and unsatisfactory services which had constituted the whole circle of their religious duties, it must have been delightful to them to come once more into open day, and to be taught the simple truths of pure de-



votion. They were now told to raise their eyes above the mere ritual of worship, and to fix them on that Father of Mercies, who is ever accessible to the humble and penitent. Upon his eternal clemency, not on "the blood of bulls or of goats," they were now invited to fix their hopes; and, abandoning the sins which polluted them, to offer up their hearts to him as "true and living sacrifices."

It was impossible that any more suitable preparation could have been, at that time, made for leading the minds of men into the illumination of the Gospel—and the efficacy of this method of instruction, however little it may be attended to, still, my brethren, remains the same.—The first step to a true sense of the importance of Christianity, is to feel the value of purity and holiness, and to throw off those delusions of the world, which vitiate the soundness of our hearts. Whenever we



can be brought to confess our sins, and to apply for the baptism of repentance, then, and then only, are we prepared to recognise the approaching Saviour, and to open our souls to that greater baptism, which conveys to them the influences of the Spirit of God.

It would be well, indeed, if both the preachers and the hearers of the Gospel were to keep steadily in mind the nature of that doctrine which was preached by John, when he came "to make straight the paths of the Lord." He did not teach that the forms and observances of any particular sect of religion could possibly effect that regeneration of the human heart, by which it may be rendered acceptable to its Maker. Neither did he teach his disciples that the repentance, which he preached, was effected by any sudden impulse of conversion, or could be manifested by any other signs than

the plain testimony of an upright life.—No doctrine, in truth, could be more remote either from bigotry or enthusiasm. To all men his language was the same, “Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”—To the proud doctors of the law, he said, “Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father.”—To the multitude, who are ever prone to extravagant illusions, he taught only the simplest and most practical doctrines. When in the agitation of their troubled consciences, they asked him, “What shall we do then?” he took occasion to instruct them in their duty, not in mysticism or *experiences*. “He answered, and said unto them, (as we are informed by St Luke), He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also the publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what

“ shall we do ? And he said unto them,  
“ Exact no more than that which is ap-  
“ pointed you. And the soldiers likewise  
“ demanded of him, saying, And what shall  
“ we do ? And he said unto them, Do vio-  
“ lence to no man, neither accuse any false-  
“ ly, and be content with your wages.”—  
If these words had been written with the  
express design of affording a contrast to  
that stupid and degrading fanaticism, with  
which the multitude have so often been  
misled, by men who look upon them-  
selves as infinitely more *Evangelical*, I  
suppose, than he who was sent as a mes-  
senger before the Lord, “ to prepare  
“ his way before him,”—they could not  
have been rendered more striking and ap-  
propriate.

Did the Baptist then, my brethren,  
teach his followers, that, by their own  
exertions alone, they could obtain the  
remission of sins, and the salvation of

their souls? No; but he taught them that their own practical efforts of amendment and of righteousness were all that depended upon *them*, that to these it was *their* business to direct their aim, and that no methods of mercy would ever be unfolded to mankind which would supersede the toils and the honours of virtue.—He taught them that, before the hopes or assistance of Heaven could be afforded them, they must themselves endeavour to perform their duty,—that they only who sought to “bring forth fruits “meet for repentance” were prepared to receive the author of their salvation,—and that those hearts alone, which had been purified in the waters of penitence, could hope to glow with the fire of the Holy Ghost.

It is in this manner that, in the very opening of the Gospel, the great Preacher of repentance and of righteousness guard-

ed against those errors, which have since been built upon the Gospel—that, before one doctrine of revealed truth had been explained, he proclaimed the eternal doctrine of the necessity of moral goodness, and assured his followers that, if they were not prepared to enter upon the path of duty, they could never find “the way of the Lord.”

While the preaching of John thus opposed that vulgar corruption of Religion, by which an inexplicable principle of faith is substituted for morality,—it no less opposed the prejudice of Philosophy, which supposes that the efforts of man are sufficient for himself. This great Teacher, whose office it was to fix deep in the human heart the principles of virtue,—to shew that no other principles of action were from that hour to be tolerated,—that “the axe was now laid unto the root of the trees, and that



“every tree which brought not forth good fruit, was to be hewn down and cast into the fire,”—this high and holy Preacher, at the same moment, affirmed, that one was coming after him, “mightier than he, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose;” and that, while he was able only to make men feel the wretchedness and degradation of sin, and to give them hope of forgiveness, if they strove to return into the paths of duty, another doctrine was about to be proclaimed, which would inspire them with the utmost faith and confidence, when they were anxious to regain the way which they had lost, and would animate all their virtuous efforts with the fire of a celestial spirit.—“Behold,” said he, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,”—and, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repent-

“ance, but he shall baptize you with the  
“Holy Ghost and with fire.”

The defects which John here professes to be inherent in his baptism are, that it was not sufficiently powerful to bring the repentant sinner a perfect assurance of the divine forgiveness—and that it could never give the requisite energy to the exertions of virtue. It was the duty of man, he could shew, to repent of his offences—but could he shew that repentance “would take away the sins of the  
“world?” It was the duty of man to “bring  
“forth fruits meet for repentance”—but where was that fire and that breath of Heaven, which could alone support the principle of life in the decaying tree?

If we will candidly examine, my brethren, we shall find that all the views of mortal wisdom on this great subject, alike labour under these deficiencies. They either confine themselves solely to the

obvious duties between man and man, without any reference to the purity of religious obedience; or, if they establish a high scale of perfection to be aimed at, they leave man afflicted with the consciousness of his many failures, and uncertain whether he will be forgiven by one who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity”—hopeless, too, of any better success in his future exertions:—or, on the contrary, they render him presumptuous, by inspiring him with the notion, that he has already attained that excellence which they require. There is thus, in every attempt of mere human instruction, something incomplete or dispiriting, or overweening; and the discovery of truths, which God alone can reveal, is necessary for supplying the defects of all such schemes.

The Baptist felt, and confessed this necessity; and it would have been wise if,

in imitation of his humility, the moral instructors of mankind had everywhere been equally candid,—if they had everywhere acknowledged, that all the covering which they could provide against the storm, was only the coarse “camels’ hair,” and “the leathern girdle” of human imperfection ; and that all the food of wisdom with which they could nourish the soul, was only the rude production of the wilderness of nature.

Many of them, indeed, have felt the sublimity of Virtue, and have gloried in the thought that she could exalt man above the stars ; but few have anticipated the far more glorious discovery that, if Virtue were feeble, “Heaven itself would stoop to her.” It is our blessedness to know, my brethren, that Heaven *has* stooped to her ; and not only to the feebleness of virtue, but to the faint and trembling hopes of penitent sin ! It is

our blessedness to be informed, that “ it  
“ came to pass in those days, that Jesus  
“ came from Nazareth of Galilee, and  
“ was baptized of John in Jordan ; and  
“ straightway coming up out of the water,  
“ he saw the heavens opened, and the  
“ Spirit, like a dove, descending upon  
“ him. And there came a voice from  
“ Heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved  
“ Son, in whom I am well pleased !”



## DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MINISTRY  
OF JESUS. \*

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MARK, i. 11.

*“ And there came a voice from Heaven,  
“ saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in  
“ whom I am well pleased.”*

I HAVE already examined the nature of that preparation, which had been made by the preaching of John, for the introduction of the Gospel. Its chief object was, to clear away all false conceptions of religion ; and to shew that, unless the heart were alive to the impressions of mo-

\* Preached on the last Sunday in Advent.

ral duty, it could not be awakened to the higher sentiments of religious faith. Yet it pointed to the incompleteness of morality, when unaided by loftier views; and affirmed that a divine Teacher was at hand, who should instruct men, not only in the letter, but in the spirit of obedience, and inspire them with those hopes and consolations, which could never be derived from the wisdom of the present world.

In the text, and in the verses immediately preceding, this heavenly Instructor comes, for the first time, into view. We see him come, in all the humility of his character, "to be baptized of John in Jordan." But his real dignity is immediately made known by the heavens opening, and the Spirit descending upon him, and the voice from Heaven, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." These are expressions of

a very high import, and they lead us naturally to form conceptions of this messenger from Heaven, of a kind quite distinct from those with which we regard any of the other inspired teachers who are introduced to us in Holy Scripture. There are many expressions of a similar nature throughout the New Testament, from which we may perceive, that the writers of these sacred books entertained notions of the great author of Christianity, as of a Being, superior in one aspect of his nature, not only to man, but to every created intelligence. “Unto  
“which of the angels,” says the apostle to the Hebrews, “said he at any time, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?”—And again, “I will be  
“to him a Father, and he shall be to me  
“a Son.”

I need not tell you that attempts have been made, in the present age, to weaken

the force of such expressions, and that these attempts have frequently proceeded from a sincere love of truth, I am not at all disposed to call in question. What advantage, however, is to be derived from them, I must confess, I am quite at a loss to discover. I can see no advantage in removing from religion those fine chains, which connect the truths immediately apparent to us, with an higher order of things above our present comprehension ; or, in endeavouring to reduce all the possibilities of existence within the limited range of the understanding of man. There are those who entertain a vehement dislike to what are called mysteries in religion ; and if by mysteries be meant a collection of contradictory circumstances, classed together apparently with no other view than that of perplexing the human mind, (a form, perhaps, which they too often

assume in the pretended expositions of men)—in this form I am ready to admit their mischievous tendency ; but there is no mystery, as it is brought before us in the simple sublimity of Scripture, which does not exalt our thoughts in the midst of its obscurity. What more ennobling to all our conceptions, than the intimation conveyed to us of that indivisible tie, which connects our once lowly instructor and friend with the mighty Lord and Governor of the universe—an union expressed by the beautiful and familiar image of a son and a father ;—of a Son, who is ONE with the Father ! What advantage can be attained by reducing these elevated views within the bounds of this “ visible, diurnal sphere,”—or, applying to the flight and the fervour of Revelation, the chilling touch of a minute Philosophy ?

No sooner was the Messiah announced in these lofty terms to the expecting



multitude, than he was again withdrawn for a time from their eyes, and “driven,” as it is strongly expressed in the verse immediately following the text, into the solitude and meditations of the wilderness, by the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit; “and he was there,” we are told, “in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto him.” A fuller account of this circumstance is given, as you know, by St Matthew, yet no small obscurity hangs over it. The fact is, that it is with the detail of our Saviour’s public life only that we are particularly interested, and that, with respect to this transaction, it is sufficient for us to know, that there were conflicts and agitations of mind necessary to be met and combated by the great Captain of human Salvation before he entered upon his ar-

duous undertaking. In this mighty trial he seems to have fortified himself against all the temptations which might afterwards assail him in the course of his ministry, and might have a tendency to mislead him, by private considerations, from the extensive benevolence of the objects which he had in view.

It is an idle curiosity which prompts us frequently, in the illustration of Scripture, to examine circumstances which are, evidently, very imperfectly explained, and of which the explanation would, probably, serve no useful purpose. In their present state of obscurity, these circumstances leave an impression on the mind of something great and awful connected with the invisible world, which man is not permitted to investigate, but the impression of which may yet be salutary. Of this kind are those dark intimations of the existence of a powerful Evil

Spirit, the enemy of God and of goodness, who fell from an exalted state of obedience and of happiness into guilt and misery, and who has ever since sought to gain associates in his ruin. Just enough is made known to us of the operations of this terrible agent, to inspire us with caution and distrust of ourselves, but not enough to give the slightest colour of plausibility to the superstitions of ignorance and of childhood. Instead of its affording any argument, as some may think, against the truth of Scripture, that a Being of this nature appears among the agents whom it introduces, the covert and cautious use which is made of his appearance is, on the contrary, a strong proof that a higher Spirit than that of man guided the pens of the Sacred Historians, since it has ever been found, that, where human imagination has been let loose upon this subject, the

utmost extravagance and folly have been the invariable result.

From the retirement and conflicts of the wilderness, Jesus now came forward into public view. It was time for him to begin his ministry; John was now in prison, and *his* office was at an end; to the preaching of repentance and of righteousness was at length to be added the knowledge of "the Gospel of the kingdom of God." "The time," said he, as he advanced, "is now fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Thus, in the opening of his instruction, he proclaimed, no less than John, the necessity of forsaking sin, and of acquiring purity of character; but, besides this, he taught that there is a "kingdom of God" corresponding to all the excellencies of the sanctified spirit,—a "kingdom not of this world," but from which blessed influen-

ces and consolations descend upon those who are studying to acquire the graces which belong to it;—a kingdom in which the humble and “poor in spirit” shall “be blessed,”—in which they “that mourn shall be comforted,”—in which “the meek” shall obtain that inheritance which is too often on earth the portion of the violent,—in which they “that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled,”—in which “the merciful shall obtain mercy,”—in which “the pure in heart shall see God!” Such was the new kingdom, the reality of which this Divine Instructor came to announce to the wandering race of men,—to those who were losing themselves in the false principles and deceiving seductions of the world, and who could not steadily pursue a better path till they were well assured of the happiness to which it led. To effect this conviction



was to be his great and arduous aim, for which he was to spare no exertion of toil, and no suffering of body or of mind. This was the Gospel which, by all means, he was to call upon men to believe, “ in  
“ all things approving himself the mi-  
“ nister of God, in much patience, in af-  
“ flictions, in necessities, in distresses, in  
“ stripes, in labours, in watchings, in  
“ fastings ; by pureness, by knowledge,  
“ by long-suffering, by kindness, by the  
“ Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned !”

Nothing, indeed, can be more striking, than the self-devotion with which Jesus immediately applied himself to the great object of his mission upon earth, and his seeming forgetfulness and abandonment of his true and inherent dignity. There appears not in any part of his demeanour the slightest trace of the weakness of human vanity ; that weakness, of which even the greatest minds are seldom en-

tirely divested, but which, whenever it is found in them, is but too evident a proof of their real littleness. It was, perhaps, the hope of finding this infirmity lurking in the *human* character of Jesus, which actuated the tempter, in that remarkable transaction already alluded to. The circumstance which he laid hold of was the stupendous declaration of the text, made by a voice from heaven—“Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Such a declaration, he seemed to think, that human nature was incapable of bearing with a calm and equal spirit—his temptations, accordingly, constantly turn upon this theme, “If thou be the Son of God,”—and one of the chief advantages which our Saviour, as a *man*, acquired from his forty days retirement, and temptation in the wilderness, may have been the attainment of that balance and composure of mind,

which qualified him, although conscious of the Divinity stirring within him, to enter, with the utmost simplicity and alacrity, into the humblest situations which it was his destiny to fill.

In this unostentatious spirit we immediately find him selecting the companions of his labours. “As he walked by the sea of Galilee,” says the Evangelist, “he saw Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, (for they were fishers); and Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men: and straightway they forsook their nets and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets, and straightway he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship, with the hired servants, and went

“after him.”—Such were the companions of the Son of God, men, upon whose poor and homely occupations, the pride of the world would have disdained to cast an eye, and whose ignorant and untutored minds, the vanity of science would have rejected with scorn—yet these were the men, who, under the guidance of him who chose them, were destined to bring mankind to wisdom and salvation ; to build up a Faith which has stood firm amidst all the corruptions of worldly principles, and against all the attacks of misguided philosophy,—which, day after day, is ever advancing, “by the word of truth, “by the power of God, by the armour of “righteousness on the right hand and on “the left, by honour and dishonour, by “evil report and good report, as deceiving and yet true, as unknown and yet “well-known, as dying, and behold it “lives, as chastened and not killed, as

“sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor  
“yet making many rich, as having no-  
“thing and yet possessing all things :” so  
it has proceeded, my brethren, and so it  
will continue to go on, nor “shall the  
“gates of hell ever prevail against it !”

When we contemplate the progress  
which the Gospel has already made, and  
the increasing prospect of its universal  
prevalence, can any thing be more inte-  
resting, than to look back upon the slight  
and apparently insignificant incident in  
which all this magnificent train of events  
seemed to originate,—“As he walked by  
“the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon, and  
“Andrew his brother, casting a net into  
“the sea ;”—if it is not, perhaps, still  
more interesting to confine our attention  
to the easy and unaffected intercourse  
between our Lord and these his lowly  
friends, so unlike every thing else that  
we meet with in this busy and ambitious



world? In this simple society, we see him throwing aside entirely all the unapproachable majesty of a superior nature. Yet, while he was thus gentle and unpretending, he never for a moment intermitted the work which his Father had given him to do, but, with the zeal which became his mission, went, we are told, throughout Galilee, preaching in the synagogues “the Gospel of the kingdom of God:” and the people, it is added, “were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes.” What were the particulars of this holy doctrine, will appear more fully as we proceed in these inquiries—in the meantime, the character of authority with which it was delivered, is a circumstance of no slight interest even to us, who live in this distant age. The words of the Divine Instructor are still before us, and in the midst of

their simplicity, and the unconnected form in which they are often presented to us—they come upon every attentive mind, with a weight and an impression which no other form of doctrine can in any respect equal, however harmonious and adorned.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour,  
“and are heavy laden, and I will give  
“you rest. Take my yoke upon you,  
“and learn of me, for I am meek and  
“lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest  
“unto your souls—for my yoke is easy,  
“and my burden is light.” Here is one,  
among many instances of the authoritative language of the Son of God. Can we, my brethren, in these hours, resist its influence, and do we not, when he is once more coming to us, as in the first dawn of his Gospel, feel ourselves called upon to come unto him, to throw every burden of worldly delusion aside, and to

take upon us the easy yoke of a holy and well-regulated spirit?—Yes! blessed Lord! thou yet vouchsafest to meet thy people on that auspicious day, which renews the remembrance of thy birth; and amid the symbols of thy body and blood; and in the words of anxious love, in which of old thou didst address thy disciples, thou now askest us, “if we also will go away?”—Shall not we, too, reply with the affectionate ardour of Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God:”—“The beloved Son,” whom the voice of our hearts, in unison with the “voice from heaven,” pronounces to be, Him “in whom” alone “the Father is well pleased.”

## DISCOURSE V.

### ON MIRACLES.

#### MARK, i. 27.

*“And they were all amazed, insomuch that  
“they questioned among themselves, say-  
“ing, What thing is this? What new  
“doctrine is this? For with authority  
“commandeth he even the unclean spirits,  
“and they do obey him.”*

IN the conclusion of my former dis-  
course, I took notice of that character of  
authority, which distinguished our Savi-  
our's instructions, and which immedi-  
ately struck the people as quite dissimilar



from any thing they had hitherto met with. "He taught them," says the Evangelist, "as one that had authority, and "not as the Scribes."—Immediately follows the account of a very remarkable transaction, which is related in these words: "There was in their synagogue a "man with an unclean spirit, and he "cried out, saying, Let us alone, what "have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of "Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy "us? I know thee who thou art,—the "holy one of God. And Jesus rebuked "him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come "out of him. And when the unclean "spirit had torn him, and cried with a "loud voice, he came out of him. And "they were all amazed, insomuch that "they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority com-



“mandeth he even the unclean spirits,  
“and they do obey him.”

There is no necessity, my brethren, to make any inquiry into the particular nature of that calamity here mentioned, and of which we hear so much in the Sacred Historians. To all outward appearance, it seems to have borne a close resemblance to insanity; and the wicked spirits, who are described as being the agents in it, might only, on particular occasions, be permitted to manifest their presence. It is enough for us to know that it was a disease, which could not be removed in the manner represented in the text, without the exercise of a miraculous power; and it was the unexpected display of this power which struck the people with amazement, and immediately occasioned, we are told, “the fame of Jesus to be  
“spread abroad throughout all the re-  
“gion round about Galilee.”

Various other instances of miracles follow in this, and in the immediately succeeding chapters; and to these, and to the other miraculous incidents recorded in the Gospels, it has always been customary to appeal, as to undeniable proofs, of the divine mission of our Lord. It is at the same time remarkable, that even this evidence, nowever striking it appears, has, in every age, been eluded by those who were unwilling to become his disciples. In the age in which these miracles were performed, and for some time afterwards, as long as their publicity made it impossible to deny their reality, they were ascribed by the enemies of the Gospel to the power of evil spirits;—in modern times it has been thought more convenient to deny that they ever took place; and it has even been ingeniously, though whimsically, argued, that, supposing they were performed, it is yet not in the power

of human testimony to establish the proof of incidents so contradictory to all experience.

I mean not, my brethren, to enter into this argument ;—the controversies of the schools have but little connection with divine truth ; and I cannot but suspect that too much weight has been put upon the decision of this question. Take the history of our religion, as it is simply narrated by the Sacred Writers, and no doubt miraculous incidents accompanied its origin and progress. These incidents, as they were acts, not only of power, but of goodness, were undeniable evidences to every candid mind, of the source from which they originated ; and our Saviour very justly reprobates, as quite incapable of conviction, and as guilty of what he calls blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, those who could witness such acts, and yet impute them to the agency of an im-

pure spirit. It is very evident, however, that, from their nature, miracles were principally designed to influence the minds of those who witnessed them ; and although it is going a great deal too far to say, that they are incapable of being proved by testimony ; yet the proof is weaker, and is less directly aimed at those who live at a remote period from their occurrence, than at those who were either themselves spectators of these wonderful events, or who were in the daily habit of hearing them related.

In this distant age, it would perhaps be wise to contemplate the miracles of our Saviour less as evidences of his mission, than as very affecting instances of his heavenly benevolence and mercy. The proof of his divine authority arises more from a multitude of conspiring circumstances, than from the force of any one argument ; and we are now, happily, in pos-

session of many striking evidences which could not at all influence the belief of those who were spectators of the miracles, and which more than counterbalance any imaginary defects in that testimony which records them. The greater miracles that have followed from the influence of the Gospel upon human society, and which have come down to us with accumulating force, through the long period of eighteen hundred years—its effects upon the hearts, the hopes, and the happiness of mankind—these, more than the dominion ascribed to its Author over the physical laws of the universe, cannot fail to strike *us* with amazement, and to make us say, “What thing is this? What doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he the unclean spirits, and they do obey him!”

Instead of building the faith of the Gospel upon miracles, it is perhaps more



necessary, in this philosophical age, to defend it against those prejudices which its miraculous occurrences are apt to excite. Men are now generally disposed to question the truth of every incident of this nature, and wherever the trace of such an occurrence is to be found, they are immediately in the habit of exclaiming,—“this must be imposture and superstition.” That this is a just maxim in most instances, I am not inclined to deny; but we ought to be very cautious how we extend it to every case, particularly to the case of a Divine Revelation, which, from the nature of the thing, must, as I have already remarked, necessarily contain something miraculous. It may still be thought, however, that the frequency of miraculous interpositions exhibited in the Gospels, has somewhat of a suspicious aspect; and although I am unwilling to enter at large into the subject, I

must request your attention to the few following observations, which seem to me sufficient to obviate this prejudice.

In the *first* place, we ought to recollect, that it is a very confined manner of judging, to examine the dispensations of Providence with a reference solely to ourselves, and to our own habits of thought. Were a revelation introduced into the world in the present age, it is *possible* that it might be unaccompanied with any multiplicity of miraculous circumstances; the understandings of men might be appealed to, rather than their senses; the Divine Teacher, perhaps, would deliver his instructions in a systematical form; and, instead of proving his authority by suspending the laws of nature, might display a more than human knowledge of all their hidden operations. One of the leading distinctions between the present age and that which preceded the intro-

duction of Christianity is this—that, from the progress of knowledge and inquiry, men have learned to consider the order of nature as established upon general laws, and there is no pursuit justly accounted more liberal than the investigation of those laws and arrangements. Facts, the most apparently disjointed and irregular, have thus been found to be harmoniously connected, and, even to the eyes of the vulgar and unlearned, Nature now seems to be one stupendous WHOLE,—the temple of the Deity,—whose presence is much rather to be discovered in its regularity than in its deviations.

The universal belief of one God, first introduced by the Gospel, was, perhaps, the leading cause of that strong impulse which has since carried forward the human mind in this splendid course of inquiry ; and modern science, amidst all its proud discoveries, may be more indebted

than it is aware, to the humble fishermen of Galilee. One thing, however, is certain, that when the Gospel first arose, no such elevated views were generally entertained. To the Gentile nations, the universe seemed to be parcelled out among an infinite variety of deities, and it was not to the harmony of the whole system that they looked for proofs of the divine agency, but to extraordinary changes in its subordinate parts. Even the Jews, to whom the knowledge of one God had been revealed, were yet inclined to regard him rather as the God of their own nation, than as the universal ruler of nature; and it was not when "day uttereth speech unto day, and "night sheweth unto night wisdom," that they were so sensible of his presence, as when they read in the records of their history, that "when the Lord fought for "Israel, the sun had stood still upon



“Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of  
“Ajalon.” In such a period of society,  
it is natural to think, that the proofs ne-  
cessary for establishing the truth of a Re-  
velation, would not be exactly the same  
with those which we should look for in  
the present age. When our Saviour ap-  
peared, no regular exposition of moral  
and religious duty, however clear and  
convincing, and no discoveries of the or-  
der of the universe, however magnificent  
and sublime, would have greatly affected  
the minds of his hearers ; and sensible  
demonstrations of his power were no less  
suited to gain their belief, than the sim-  
plicity and artlessness of his doctrines  
were accommodated to their untutored  
understandings.

While Miracles were thus the only  
species of evidence, by which the as-  
sent of a rude and unscientific age  
could be won, and are, therefore, to be



viewed with a particular reference to the period of the world in which they were performed—we are yet not to imagine, that the belief of them is a matter of indifference, in an age of knowledge and philosophical observation. It may, on the contrary, be shewn, that credible accounts of such events, independently of the evidence which they afford of any revelation which is founded upon them, are of the greatest moment in counter-acting a prejudice which the inquiries of science sometimes produce. When it is believed, that the laws of nature have ever been constant and invariable, without suffering the slightest suspension, the prejudice is apt to insinuate itself into our minds, that their operation depends not upon the will of the Creator, but upon some inherent necessity ; and the very circumstances upon which the proofs of design in nature are founded, are thus,

by some minds, interpreted into proofs of the total absence of design. Now, it affords an important remedy against this prejudice, to have good grounds for believing, that, in certain periods of the world, when occasional suspensions of natural laws were of peculiar importance, such suspensions did, in fact, take place.

I proceed, *secondly*, to remark, that while in the evidences which he brought of his divine authority, our Saviour condescended to accommodate himself to the habits of thought in the age in which he lived, there is yet, in the character of his miracles, no trace of that wildness and extravagance which is so striking in most miraculous histories that have come down to us from ancient times. *His* miracles partake of the general simplicity of his character. There is nothing in them that we can refer to vanity or the love of display. On the contrary, we commonly

find him desirous that they should be much less known than the gratitude of those upon whom they were performed, could easily admit. In the end of the chapter before us we meet with an instance of this humility. “There came a leper to him,” says the Evangelist, “beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will, be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately his leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses

“commanded for a testimony unto  
“them.”

These events are narrated, too, with the same unimposing plainness with the other parts of our Lord's history. This, I repeat, is quite unexampled in the common accounts of miraculous incidents. We shall invariably find the narrators of them to be influenced by national or religious vanity, and eager to set off, to the best advantage, the fancied exploits of their hero or their saint—they for ever excite ridicule instead of admiration! How different that uniform tenor of simple majesty which runs through every page of the Gospel history; and how beautifully do all the incidents, both natural and miraculous, correspond with each other!

I remark, in the *third* place, that the miracles of our Lord have a perfect agreement with the character of his life and



doctrines, and are either acts of the utmost mercy and goodness, or are the means of conveying some useful instruction. The multiplicity of his miracles is to be ascribed chiefly to his readiness to relieve every case of distress which was presented to him. Wherever he went, something of this kind occurred. When he went into the house of Simon and Andrew, his disciples, there, as is related in this chapter, he found “Simon’s wife’s  
“mother lying sick of a fever, and anon  
“they tell him of her : And he came and  
“took her by the hand, and lift her up,  
“and immediately the fever left her, and  
“she ministered unto them. And at  
“even when the sun did set, they  
“brought unto him all that were dis-  
“eased, and them that were possessed  
“with devils, and he healed many.”—In the incident which occurs in the beginning of the second chapter, of the cure



of a man sick of the palsy, he takes occasion to instruct the spectators in the great object of his mission upon earth.

“ When Jesus saw their faith, he said  
“ unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy  
“ sins be forgiven thee. But there were  
“ certain of the scribes sitting there, and  
“ reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this  
“ man thus speak blasphemies? Who can  
“ forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his  
“ spirit that they so reasoned within  
“ themselves, he said unto them, Why  
“ reason ye these things in your hearts?  
“ Whether is it easier to say to the sick  
“ of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee,  
“ or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and  
“ walk? But that ye may know that the  
“ Son of Man hath power on earth to  
“ forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the  
“ palsy), I say unto thee, arise and take  
“ up thy bed, and go thy way into thy

“ house. And immediately he arose,  
“ took up the bed, and went forth before  
“ them all ; insomuch that they were all  
“ amazed, and glorified God, saying, We  
“ never saw it on this fashion !”

These, my brethren, are the observations which have suggested themselves to me on the subject of our Lord's miracles ; and, even at the hazard of being somewhat tedious, I have been induced to bring them forward in one view, that we may proceed with less interruption in our future inquiries.—The miracles of our Lord, in as far as they are instances of divine power, are evidently beyond our imitation ; but the spirit of unwearied benevolence which breathed in them, can still actuate our hearts, and can produce the effect of miracles upon the happiness of our fellow-creatures. That spirit is to be found where our Lord sought it, in earnest communion with God. “ In the morn-

"ing, rising up a great while before day,  
 "he went out and departed into a solita-  
 "ry place, and there prayed." May  
 these words sink into all our souls, and  
 in our hours of meditation and secret  
 thought, may we become acquainted with  
 that "pure and undefiled religion," which,  
 while it is kindled in prayer to God, seeks  
 to become a fellow-worker with him, by  
 "going about and doing good!"

## DISCOURSE VI.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE POOR. \*

MATTHEW, xi. 5.

*"The poor have the Gospel preached  
unto them."*

THESE words, my brethren, point out what was, in our Lord's opinion, one of the most striking evidences of the truth of his mission. He subjoins them to the enumeration of his miraculous powers, to which we more commonly appeal when we state the proofs of Christianity.

\* Preached December 26, 1813, when a collection was made in all the churches in Edinburgh, for the institution of public schools, upon the principles of the British Society for Education.



“Go,” said he to the disciples of John, who were sent to him by their master to inquire whether or no he were the promised Messiah, “Go and shew John  
 “again those things which ye do hear  
 “and see : the blind receive their sight,  
 “and the lame walk ; the lepers are  
 “cleansed, and the deaf hear ; the dead  
 “are raised up, and the poor have the  
 “Gospel preached to them !” He seems to consider the last of these circumstances as a more important evidence than any of the preceding ; and, in some respects, it certainly is so. The others were directed to the senses, this is more particularly addressed to the understanding and to the heart. The miraculous proofs were chiefly valuable to those who witnessed them ; this proof accompanies the Gospel through every stage of its progress ; and, at the present hour, as in the first moment of its origin,



proclaims the benevolence of him from whom it proceeded.

On this day, my brethren, when, in the true spirit of that Gospel, we are called upon to contribute our assistance to the instruction of the poorer classes of our people, a few observations on this great characteristic of our religion will not, I trust, be altogether unprofitable.

In considering this subject, let us inquire, first, into the benevolence of the design, which our Lord here professes to have in view ;—we shall find no parallel to it in the history of any other teacher of moral or religious wisdom. It is the professed object, indeed, of all moral instructors, to do good to mankind ; but they have ever been too ready to look upon men through the medium of those adventitious distinctions into which society is divided ; and, while they resign the multitude to the seemingly necessary thralldom

of error and superstition, they direct all their efforts to the improvement of those who have received the advantages of education, or who occupy a prominent station in the theatre of the world. Thus, even the greatest benefactors of mankind have rather widened than contracted the invidious bounds of separation between the higher and the lower orders of society; and by aiming chiefly at the instruction of the one, they have contributed somewhat to the increase of the prejudice which represents the other as an inferior race of beings.

In this state of human sentiment and opinion, was there no peculiarity in that wisdom, which, looking through these illusions, could discern under the depression of ignorance and the vices of poverty, the secret vestiges of an immortal soul? And was there no divine benevolence displayed in the design of

elevating this neglected part of mankind to a true feeling of their moral dignity, by supplying them with a few plain principles of faith and of virtue ; by assuring them that they too are under the superintendence of one equal Providence ; that one Father looks down with the eye of love upon all the family of mankind ; that one Saviour came to teach and to die for all ; and that the same promises of immortal life are offered to the lowest, as to the most distinguished condition of human fortune ?

In the second place, let us consider how much the benevolence of the design was increased, by the manner in which it was carried into execution ; and how admirably “the wisdom of God,” however it might be accounted “foolishness” by men, adapted the means to the end. We know that the humble station in which our Saviour appeared, and his entire dis-

regard of all worldly distinction or applause, was the leading objection of the Jews to the truth of his pretensions ;—and even among ourselves, objections of a similar nature may perhaps, imperceptibly, insinuate themselves into our minds. —The rich and the powerful may find some difficulty in acknowledging, as a master, one to whom wealth and ambition were without charms ; those who are distinguished for learning or genius, may sometimes be inclined to doubt the superiority of one, whose wisdom was quite unassuming, and was never exhibited for the purposes of display. To such classes of men the humble condition of our Saviour, and his unaffected character, are, indeed, “ stumbling-blocks,” which it requires some effort of recollection to overcome ;—but how beautifully were these very circumstances adapted to that mighty object, which he here declares he had



principally in view ; and how well did they qualify him “ to preach the Gospel “ to the poor !”

Whom can we conceive so able to persuade *them* of the dignity and the happiness of a virtuous life, as one whom they saw before them exhibiting, amidst all the depression of outward fortune, the utmost grandeur of human virtue ! Even at this distance of time, my brethren, with what a feeling of exultation must the poor and lowly contemplate the history of him, who, although the Son of God, yet submitted to all the severest hardships of poverty and contempt ; and where, among the writings of men, will they find instructions equally simple and applicable to their condition, with those words of divine wisdom, which draw their illustrations from the humblest employments of life, and which were originally addressed to unlettered fishermen ?



Surely this entire absence of earthly distinction, this appearance of simple and unostentatious benevolence, is a proof of the mission of our Lord infinitely more striking, to every right mind, than if he had come with the splendours of conquest, or with the pride of science ; and that love, which descended to embrace the most helpless of the race of man, is impressed with more interesting marks of the divine origin from which it proceeded, than all the miracles and signs which accompanied it in its progress !

At the same time, if no corresponding effects had followed from this benevolent design, we might have doubted of its wisdom, and have been inclined to class it with those splendid projects for the improvement of the world, which enthusiasm sometimes suggests, but which are too often found inconsistent with the present condition of our nature. Let us then, in the

third place, look to its effects.—If we consider the opinions of the populace in every Christian country, on the great subjects of Morals and of Religion, we shall find that they are commonly sound and reasonable, to a degree that was seldom, perhaps, attained by the wisest men of antiquity. Even in those countries where the Gospel is most vitiated by superstition, the great leading principles of moral and religious wisdom are still prevalent ; and in those where it is taught in its purity, we may perceive the lowest, and, in other respects, the most ignorant of men, fully aware of those lofty truths, on which all the dignity of their nature depends.—“ Go,” says Sherlock, “ in-  
 “ to our villages, you will there find a firm  
 “ persuasion of the unity of God, who  
 “ made heaven and earth, and all things  
 “ in them : The meanest of the people  
 “ will tell you, that an honest heart is

“the only acceptable sacrifice to God,  
 “and that there is no way to please him,  
 “but by doing justly and righteously.”

In every Christian country, accordingly, innumerable instances are to be met with, even in the humblest fortune, of the most cheerful dependence upon Providence, and the steadiest adherence to duty,—those genuine fruits of the Gospel which, wherever they spring, whether in the cottage or in the palace, convert them equally into the abodes of happiness and contentment. These are circumstances, indeed, the extent of which cannot be very easily estimated, because they depend so much upon the virtue of individuals. Besides that, the obscurity of lowly virtue hides it from the eyes of the world; and those who are not willing to find it will often doubt of its existence. Without inquiring into particulars, however, we may be satisfied,

that the effects of the Gospel on the minds of the multitude *must* have been great, from the fact of its long establishment, which has thus given scope to all its benevolent tendencies to operate. Its doctrines have been believed, and its moral sanctions recognised, for upwards of eighteen hundred years, and, during all this extended period, “the poor have “had it preached to them.”

Here, then, my brethren, is no system which has flourished only for a season, and has then ceased among men. The very establishment of the Gospel proves distinctly that it was no system of impracticable enthusiasm, but that it was suited to the character and the condition of human nature. From its first origin to the present time, it has never ceased, notwithstanding the frequent follies and crimes, alas ! of those to whom it has been entrusted, from spreading the same equal

hopes, and the same equal laws, among all the family of mankind ; and, at this hour, as during our Saviour's ministry, it proclaims the salvation of God to the poor as well as to the prosperous, and calls upon all men to walk worthy of Him who created, and Him who redeemed them !

Would your time permit, I might likewise shew, that it is not only as moral and religious beings that the Gospel has elevated the poor ; it has no less improved their temporal condition. From the moment that *it* was preached to them, the natural and original equality among men was felt and acknowledged, and those opinions and prejudices which would consign any part of the human race to slavery and oppression were for ever put to the blush. While the precepts of the Gospel have constantly discouraged and repressed all irregula-



city and turbulence, yet, in every Christian country, the inferior classes have gradually been rising in consequence and weight, and the rich and the powerful have been made to hear the voice which says, that in all essential respects men are equals and brethren. This voice has awed the insolence of the oppressor, and has awakened the feelings of the humane, and the public-spirited,—it has been heard by kings upon their thrones, and legislators in their senates; and now, at length, (at least in one favoured land,) the poor man in his cottage may sit secure under the shelter of equal laws; and, while encircled by his children, he prays to the God of their Fathers, he feels, with exulting gratitude, that the daily bread which blesses their industry cannot be wrung from them, but that they too have a place allotted to them in the unviolated sanctuary of their country!

While the influence of the Gospel has, in this manner, produced the independence and freedom of the lower orders of men, it has, at the same time, rendered these advantages more secure, by opening their minds to the desire, and by supplying them with the means, of knowledge and improvement. The education of the poor (the great subject to which I am led, by the charity of this day) has originated entirely, let it be remembered, from their instruction in the Scriptures ; and whatever advantages the world may derive from the general prevalence of education, must ultimately be referred to that source from which they have sprung. How much, therefore, of the progress of knowledge and civilization among mankind has received its impulse from the Gospel having been preached to the poor ! And to what other cause can we so well ascribe the first

movement of that advancing stream of intellectual cultivation which is now encircling the dwellings of men, and which all the efforts of prejudice and presumption will never be able effectually to impede?

There is no period since the introduction of the Gospel, when so much has been done as in the present age, to give effect to the gracious designs of its Author, in undertaking the protection and instruction of the poor: yet, even with respect to this truly Christian enterprise, which we should imagine would, of all others, be the most free from misconception, prejudices have arisen, and controversies have been set on foot, which may at least have the good effect of proving, that it is not to the Gospel, as its enemies are apt to insinuate, that the spirit of contention and disputation is in any instance to be imputed, but to those princi-

ples of pride and opposition in human nature, which are ever ready to find or to make occasions of dissension. In former ages, when the minds of men were entangled in the foolish disputes of the schools, they seized hold of every real or imagined obscurity in the *doctrines* of Christianity, and upon these found means to fasten all the quibbles and the sophisms of mistaken ingenuity, and rancour, and presumption,—and thus to give a pretext to the infidel for maintaining, with some plausible shew of reason, that such are the natural consequences of the mysteries of Christian faith. But it has been left for *this* age to demonstrate, that even the most enlightened principles of *Charity* are liable to similar misapprehensions and controversies—that not only in the nice distinctions of theological opinions, but in the open ground of Christian exertion, there are sects and parties, and

alarms of heresy,—and that here, too, men will tie themselves to favourite names, and split hairs with all the refinement of scholastic subtlety, where their only object ought to be to promote “the glory of God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men !”

I will not insult your reason, my brethren, by entering into any such controversial discussions ; nor do I conceive it necessary, especially after the persuasive and unanswerable eloquence which you have heard on a former part of this day, to prove to you, that when you educate the poor of your people, you are performing a work most consonant to the spirit of the Gospel. What greater or nobler charity, even in a temporal point of view, than to instruct them in those simple branches of knowledge, by which their industry may extend the sphere of its operations, by which they may



be rendered more able to gain an honest subsistence; or, perhaps, to ascend in the scale of society! How important, in every moral view, to give them some taste for intellectual exertion; to open to them some of those enjoyments of the understanding, which may raise them above mere sensual existence, and may make them feel the rank which they hold in the system of being! How contemptible those apprehensions which look upon the improvement of the faculties and minds of the lower orders, as any infringement upon the privileges of the higher,—or suppose that men will be less regular and orderly, when they have been reared to habits of thought and of industry, than when they are left to the dominion of brute passions,—or will be less sensible of the advantages of political union and distinctions, when they can themselves reflect upon the necessary arrange-

ments of society, than when their minds are left open to every impression which they may receive from the factious demagogue!

I am ready to admit, my brethren, that, without attention to religious instruction, all other knowledge is at times productive of evil, but when we are giving way to the weakness of such alarms, let us call to mind, that “the Gospel is “preached to the poor;” that every plan of education for them is necessarily founded upon Religion; that the volume of the Scriptures is that which must, before all others, be put into their hands; and that the first rising of the pride of reason in their hearts will be checked by the sentiment of Christian humility!—There is no ground of alarm with respect to the instruction of the *poor*,—give *them* education, you *must*, at the same time, give them the Gospel! Alas! it is a very dif-

ferent order of men who, although possessed of the glad tidings of salvation, yet do not always seem, so readily, to feel their import. It is to the pride of rank, of riches, and of talents in the higher classes of society, that the greatest gift which was ever given to men is so often given in vain ! The poor naturally cling to the precious boon ; if *they* ever come to despise it, it is not from what they have learned, but from what they have seen : it is not from knowing too much, but from imitating too closely,—from giving their superiors credit for more information and wisdom than they in fact possess ! This is in truth the chief advantage of the education of the poor : put it in their power to find Religion, and they *will* find it, find it, almost, for themselves, as it meets them, in the beautiful and tender simplicity of Scripture, where they are so often called by name, where promises are given them so

vast in extent, and so pure in principle ; where they will trace the footsteps of Him who lived and died for them, and whose Sacred Voice, while it rebukes every turbulent or repining thought which may spring from the hardships of their condition, is ever with them to cheer them in their toils, and to applaud their humble Virtues.

But it is unnecessary, in this part of our land, to expatiate upon truths which are so well known. The steady, and wise, and religious character of the Scottish peasantry has long been proverbial ; and it can be ascribed to nothing so much as to that system of useful and pious discipline which has descended to them from their Fathers. This system, however, could not be carried into effect in those situations in which it was most wanted, in Cities, where there are so many temptations to every species of vice and idleness ; and it may

be accounted one of the most providential discoveries of the present age, that means have been fallen upon, to simplify the business of Education, and to bring it, at a comparatively small expence, within the reach of every individual in the community. To whom the merit of this discovery is principally due, or from what quarter it has chiefly arisen, I know not, my brethren, nor have I much anxiety to inquire; but this I know, that it is worse than folly to obstruct its mighty efficacy in the great work of instruction, by which the lower ranks of men are to be trained to the habits of virtuous industry, of intelligence, of Morals, and of Religion, from any weak scruples, and surmises, and imaginations of evil without a name!

You have it, this day, in your power to shew your superiority to such delusions: to assist those wise and benevolent men,



who have so nobly exerted themselves in this great work ; who are too well aware of the value of religious knowledge, ever to give *their* sanction to any plan of education which is not built on the eternal rock of the Gospel ; who are careful that the first book which is presented to the poor, should be the volume of Christian salvation ; and who, while they are anxious that they may be taught the means of providing for their temporal good, are, above all things, anxious that they may “ have the Gospel preached to “ them.”

## DISCOURSE VII.

ON OUR SAVIOUR'S METHODS OF INSTRUCTION.

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MARK, ii. 13.

*“And he went forth again by the sea-side,  
“and all the multitude resorted unto him,  
“and he taught them.”*

IN following out the history of our Lord, we have already seen him going from place to place within the district of Galilee, where his parents resided, and which he does not seem to have quitted for some time after he began his ministry. Occasionally we find him in the synagogues

expounding the Scriptures, and preaching the “ Gospel of the kingdom of God ;” at other times he goes forth, as in the text, into the scenes of Nature ; and from a mountain or by the sea-side, he calls the attention of the multitude who resorted unto him, to those sublime discoveries which connect earth with Heaven.—In a former discourse,\* I took occasion to make some observations on those acts of miraculous beneficence which accompanied his progress. I am now led to examine his methods of instruction, and some of the lessons which he delivered.

In the present state of the world, instruction is commonly conveyed in a regular and didactic form ; and there may, therefore, seem to us to be, at times, no small want of connection in the discourses of our Saviour, and in the writ-

\* See Discourse V.

ings of the Apostles. To enter into the full spirit of these, we ought to remove ourselves, in fancy, to the age in which they lived, and to the description of people to whom their words were most commonly addressed. In an age in which men were not much accustomed to general or abstract reasonings, it was more useful, surely, to state the results of any system of Moral or Religious truth, in a striking and simple manner, than to point out all the processes of thought by which they might be established. We accordingly find that, even in our Saviour's most regular discourses, a great many truths are brought successively into view, connected rather in their general spirit, than by any distinct chain of reasoning,—and they are stated briefly and decisively, as maxims which may stand upon their own evidence, without requiring much illustration in their

support.—This method was particularly suited to that order of people to whom the truths of the Gospel were originally preached,—the poorer and more ignorant classes of society ; and it is this form of doctrine, so frequent in the Sacred Writings, which, notwithstanding the occasional obscurity arising from a reference to peculiar customs, and from obsolete modes of expression, still adapts them so remarkably to the taste and the understanding of the multitude.

It was not often, however, that our Saviour delivered his precepts in any thing like a prepared and set form. The most noted instance of the kind is that beautiful and comprehensive view of Christian duty, given us by St Matthew, which is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. His more usual method was, to take occasion from some incident in the common intercourse of life, to ex-



plain to his followers some one or other of those enlarged views of Duty which were so much above the common grovelling notions of his countrymen ; and it is in this unostentatious guise that we still gather, in the course of his history, most of those pure and perfect principles to which nothing, in any respect equal, can be found in the most refined Schools of Human Philosophy. At other times, he veiled instruction under the garb of some simple allegory or story ; and in this shape, so well adapted likewise to a rude period of Society, and so interesting still, from the contrast between the loftiness of the truths thus delivered, and the homeliness of the dress in which they are disguised, many, as you well know, of the most important precepts of the Gospel are conveyed:

In the present Lecture, an opportunity is afforded me of illustrating a few of

those great truths unfolded by our Lord, as they arose naturally from the incidents which befel him ;—in the following one, I shall have occasion to examine some of his more remarkable Parables.

In the verse immediately following the text, we find him adding to his disciples a man of the name of Levi, taken from that class of people who were particularly odious to the Jews, the tax-gatherers appointed by the Roman government. We may, indeed, suppose, that these men were frequently guilty of acts of cruelty and injustice ; yet our Saviour seems always to have looked with much more indulgence upon those vices into which men were betrayed by the peculiarities of their situation, than upon those which argued a hardened and vitiated heart. The Publicans, therefore, who, in the Jewish stile, are constantly classed with sinners, he seems always to have had

much satisfaction in representing as infinitely more amiable than the proud Doctors of the Law, who were so entirely satisfied with themselves, and all their own performances. In the present instance, mankind have been greatly benefited by the choice made of the publican Levi, as we are informed that he was, the same individual who, under the name of Matthew, has left the most important, perhaps, of all the narratives of his Master's history.

When he went into the house of this new convert, and sat down at meat with him and his friends, the ill-natured and illiberal spirit of the Jewish teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, was immediately excited.—“How is it,” they said to his disciples, “that he eateth and drinketh “with publicans and sinners?” This gave occasion to the observation which follows, and which contains, in a few words, so

much of the genuine spirit of Christianity. "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that be whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." It may, indeed, be affirmed, that, in these words, the most distinguishing feature of the Gospel is brought before us. The great object of our Saviour's coming into the world was, that he might call "sinners to repentance." Other objects, no doubt, he had in view. He came to elevate the hopes of the righteous, "to bring life and immortality to light," and to raise, in consequence of these discoveries, the moral character of mankind. He came likewise to comfort man under the afflictions of his present condition, and to shew him, that the servant of God can only be "made perfect by suffering."

These were great and beneficent designs. At the same time, these triumphant hopes and consolations of Religion have ever been, in some degree, the portion of the righteous : virtue itself suggests them to the mind ; and, although they have never been felt so fully as by those whom the Gospel has instructed, yet it is not here that the astonishing mercy of that dispensation is peculiarly to be found. Amidst all the gloom and misery of mortality, the good man can lift the eye of hope ;—it is the sinner who can find no beam of consolation ; it is he who feels himself hated by man, despised by himself, without hope of pardon from God, and who wears out his life in melancholy dejection, or seeks a vain relief in the repetition of his sins. Even in heathen times, Virtue under misfortune could find consolation by laying claim to the protection of Providence ; and the



object which, of all others, was supposed most interesting to the Deity, was that of a good man struggling nobly with the storms of the world. It was left for an higher philosophy to discover that there was yet an object more interesting to Heaven,—that of a bad man turning from the evil of his ways,—that the tears of the penitent are precious in the sight of Angels,—and that the Father of Spirits is ever ready to be entreated by those who long to be restored to his favour.

Such was the great design of Almighty benevolence in the promulgation of the Gospel. The passage before us shews further in what manner this design was executed. Our Saviour came to offer pardon to an offending world. Did he therefore come with a supercilious air of authority, and assume an unfeeling superiority to the beings whom he came to reform? No; he lowered himself to their

condition in every thing but sin ; he went easily, we perceive, into every kind of society, and took no precedence except what was naturally yielded to his Wisdom and his Virtue. It was by the gentlest and most insinuating means that he carried on the work of reformation. Wherever penitence appeared, that instant he embraced and received it, and would never permit the haughtiness of human virtue to repress the returning sinner. No man, indeed, according to the Religion which he taught, has a right to claim any inherent superiority over his fellow-creatures ; those who think themselves righteous above all others, he considered as the farthest removed from the true principles of Christian perfection ; and while they supposed themselves at a distance from the class of sinners, in his view they were the most nearly connected with them. Nothing, therefore, could be finer

than the covert reproof which he here gave to the Pharisees, and to all such false pretenders to righteousness. He seemed to say, that they were too righteous to require any assistance from him ; but their consciences must have informed them, when he made this observation, that in fact they required, more than any others, the healing of the Divine Physician ; and that it was in that character only, not as good and perfect men, that they could have any title to approach to him.

While the principle of Christian mercy is so beautifully brought out in these few expressions, “ I came not to call the “ righteous, but sinners, to repentance,” the liberality and freedom of the duties which the Gospel inculcates are shewn in the course of some other little incidents which immediately follow. The same morose and intolerant Characters

who seemed to think it so unbecoming a Divine Teacher to go into the company of sinful men, likewise found fault with our Saviour, because he did not strictly inculcate the necessity for those external observances which constituted, in their apprehensions, the chief sum of Religion. He did not insist that his disciples should fast ; and on the Sabbath-day his piety did not principally shew itself in the minuteness of rules and forms.

On the subject of fasting, his thoughts are veiled in a language somewhat metaphorical ; but it is not difficult to discover his meaning. He means to say, that all practices of this kind are, in fact, merely helps to Devotion ; and while he was with his disciples, and instructed them in the true principles of Religion, and fired their hearts with the love of God and of man, that they stood in no need of any artificial self-denial ; and that he would leave



it to themselves to discover the proper occasions for again resorting to such assistances, when, upon his quitting them, they should be once more exposed to the dangers and temptations of the world. “ Can the children of the bride-chamber “ fast, while the bridegroom is with them? “ So long as they have the bridegroom “ with them, they cannot fast. But the “ days will come when the bridegroom “ shall be taken away from them, and then “ shall they fast in those days.” He adds another reason for the little weight which he laid on the external offices of religion,—his great object was to point out its real and essential duties, and if he had wasted time in expounding the former, he would have weakened the force of his other instructions, so infinitely more important. These observances, which had constituted the whole religion of the Pharisees, were therefore the old



garment, which it was quite vain to attempt to mend, and which it was much better at once to throw aside, and to provide a new one in its stead.

Our Saviour's observations on the Sabbath are no less enlightened and valuable. The Pharisees reproached his disciples for plucking the ears of corn on that day, as they passed through some corn-fields; and on another occasion, which we find at the beginning of the third chapter, they have even the effrontery to throw out insinuations against himself, for performing upon the Sabbath the miracle of restoring the withered hand. Nothing, certainly, could be more absurd than accusations of this nature; but in an age in which so much stress was put upon outward forms, they probably carried some aspect of plausibility. Mankind are therefore much beholden to the decisive and triumphant refutation which

the words of our Lord have for ever given to such bigotted notions. He represents the institution of the Sabbath as intended for the improvement and the happiness of the human race—therefore any action which was either indifferent, and had no tendency to carry away the mind from religious impressions, or which was conducive to the necessary support of life, could never be justly construed as contrary to the spirit of that holy ordinance. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Much less could any blame be justly thrown on the exercise of acts of beneficence upon that sacred day. Such acts were, on the other hand, the most correspondent of any with its character. In an enlarged view of Christian duty, not “to do good,” if it is in our power, is “to do evil,”—not “to save life,” if we are able to save it, is “to kill;”—and surely

the dispositions which led to such a description of conduct were not suited to the heavenly benevolence of the Sabbath.

There are still one or two instances that follow in succession, which I shall quote as additional examples of the incidental instructions which our Lord was accustomed to draw from the circumstances in which he happened to be placed. The celebrity which he had acquired seems to have struck two sets of individuals in a peculiar, but very different manner. The Jewish doctors, provoked with his opposition to their narrow and dogmatical assumptions, thought fit to ascribe his miraculous works to the power of the Devil. His Relations, on the other hand, who, in the simplicity of his early life, had not prognosticated the sudden influence which he was to obtain over the minds of his countrymen, imagined that he was hurried along by some

singular enthusiasm which would, probably, terminate in his destruction. "They came to lay hold on him," (we are told,) "for they said he is beside himself." To the Scribes and Pharisees he triumphantly replies, that the character of his works might decide as to the source from which they came,—that all his efforts were directed against the powers of darkness;—how then could "Satan cast out Satan?" How could his kingdom "be divided against itself?" Upon this occasion it was that he uttered those memorable words, the most severe that he ever uttered, in which he almost excludes from the hopes of mercy those who could contemplate his performances, and yet impute them to an impure origin. "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation,—because they said, he hath an unclean spirit."



The reproof which he gives to his Relations for their attempt to prevent the accomplishment of his great designs, is conceived in a very different spirit,—and, at the same time, brings forward the Saviour of the world in one of the most interesting aspects in which he can appear. “There came then,” says the Evangelist, “his brethren and his mother, and standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.”

These words, which any illustration



would only enfeeble, are addressed to the whole of the human race. What encouragement do they afford to our exertions, while they tell the most obscure individual among mankind, that if he will “do the will of God,” he will be regarded by his Heavenly Master in the closest and most endearing light;—and how beautiful an example do they bring of that divine instruction and consolation, which, from the little daily occurrences of his life, our Lord was enabled to provide for the future generations of men!—May God grant that we may all profit from these lessons of wisdom, and of truth;—and to Him, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be ever ascribed, as is most due, all glory and praise!

## DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER, &c.\*

MARK, iv. 2, 3.

*“ And he taught them many things by pa-  
“ rables, and said unto them in his doc-  
“ trine, Hearken, behold there went out  
“ a sower to sow.”*

AN opportunity is now afforded me, my brethren, of illustrating some of those important doctrines which our Lord conveyed under the disguise of parables. In the very beautiful one which begins with

\* Preached on Sexagesima Sunday.

the words of the text, and which you will find in another form, in the Gospel for this day, the great Sower of the seed of life has pointed out the kind of obstacles to which his religion is exposed in the world, and the nature of those qualifications which can alone render it effectual for the moral discipline of the heart. The whole passage is highly worthy of our most serious attention, for never, I believe, were truths more weighty and profound, represented by images so obvious and familiar.

“Behold there went out a sower to sow.” From this very simple introduction, a reflection of some moment is suggested. It exhibits to us, in a striking manner, the natural and unambitious character of the Christian institution. When we first hear of a revelation from heaven, our imaginations are apt to take alarm: we immediately conjure up into our minds all those images of supernatural power which

seem characteristic of the approaching Deity, and, according to our predominant disposition, we either sink into superstitious fear, or close our eyes in blind incredulity. Now, the interesting and important circumstance in Christianity is, that while it is supernatural in its origin, it is yet, in a wonderful manner, accommodated to the established system of nature, so that we are enabled, without any kind of force upon our thoughts, to pass from the notions of common life to the higher views of Religion. Nothing can be more obvious to an attentive reader of the Gospels, than the constant aim of our Saviour to bring down himself and his doctrine to the level of that Nature which he undertook to reform, and while, as we have seen, he did such works as were beyond the reach of human power, and opened discoveries into the ways of God, which it had never entered into the heart of man to conceive,—he yet seemed to



be as simply and humbly employed as  
 “a sower who goes out to sow.”

“And as he sowed, some fell by the  
 “way-side, and the fowls of the air came  
 “and devoured it up.”—It is a most interesting inquiry, my brethren, what becomes of this Moral seed from which the harvest of Eternity is to spring. The words, which you have now heard, point out the manner in which a great portion of it is lost. The radical defect to which men, in general, are but too liable, is thoughtlessness and unconcern respecting the great object of their being. They are apt to pass through the world without consideration; and if, in the course of their existence, they have not been guilty of any flagrant breach of morality, they yet have never made the principles on which their conduct should be regulated, an object of anxiety and concern. They are carried along by the common tide,



and follow the multitude, whether it be to good or evil. “These are they by the way-side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”—On their inattentive minds, the great lessons of Religion make little or no impression, and they hear the word which calls them to the performance of those duties for which they were born, without seeming to understand it. It is, my brethren, a melancholy reflection, that this description of character is not to be found chiefly among the poorer and more ignorant classes of society; among those, who, if they know not their duty, may meet with some excuse from their want of opportunity to learn it. It is, I fear, to be found still more among those, who, having every opportunity to learn what station they ought to occupy in the kingdom of God,

yet stand by "the way-side." It is to be found among the dissipated and the idle, who, forgetting the place which they hold in society, and the talents committed to their trust, too often complete the vain round of an insignificant life, without having performed any duty well, or having seriously thought that there were any to be performed!

"And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprung up, because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun was up it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away."—  
 "These are they which are sown on stony ground," as our Saviour explains himself, "who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness, and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution

“arise for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.”—These words describe, very emphatically, another numerous portion of the human race; those who, though fully aware of what is incumbent on them, as men and as Christians, and although sensible to its seriousness and importance, yet have not strength of mind sufficient to carry them through those temptations which impede them in the course of their practice. “They hear the word, and receive it with gladness;” they feel its beauty, and they know its value: they hope and believe that they have found armour against the hour of trial: yet when that hour comes, they scarcely make any resistance, and again fall a prey to the sins which most easily beset them,—or have not resolution to bear up against the evils of their condition. There is a constant source of self-deception in persons of this character,

which ought to be pointed out to them. They satisfy their consciences with the belief that they love their duty, and too readily impute to the weakness of human nature, those deviations from it into which they too commonly run. But it is evident, that however the imaginations of such men may be delighted with contemplating the beauty of virtue, or the excellence of Christianity, yet their hearts are not really attached to those divine principles of action: they will make no sacrifice for them; they will go through no trial for the sake of their conscience.

“And some fell among thorns, and the  
 “thorns grew up and choked it, and it  
 “yielded no fruit.” “These are they  
 “which are sown among thorns: such  
 “as hear the word, and the cares of this  
 “world, and the deceitfulness of riches,  
 “and the lusts of other things entering  
 “in, choke the word, and it becometh



“unfruitful.” The characters already described are those of the inattentive and the irresolute. There is still another large description of men who both seem attentive to the principles of rectitude, and are not naturally deficient in energy and perseverance, but who are so immersed in the business and the pleasures of the world, that the occupations suited to them as moral and religious beings, are sunk entirely, or but slightly fulfilled, amidst the multiplicity of their other concerns. Such are the men who are much more eager to acquire, than to make a proper use of riches : who, while they observe the forms of morality and piety, yet feel not the spirit by which these principles act upon the mind : and while they are perhaps observant of all the decencies of life, are yet much more alive to their own selfish conveniences than to the severest necessities of their brethren. These pass in the world



for wise men : often, too, for men of propriety and regularity of conduct ; but, in the language of the Gospel, their virtue is “ choked,” and, while they may seem praise-worthy in the sight of men, they are yet unfruitful towards God.

It is to be remarked, that the preceding characters are by no means the characters of those who lose their place in society in consequence of their vices, or who sink into any great degree of disrespect. They are, on the contrary, the characters of men whom we may meet with every day in the world : and it is therefore of the utmost moment for us to search into our own hearts, and to examine whether or no we can be classed among them. The inquiry, my brethren, is indeed one of the deepest interest ; for the happiness of men, in a future state of existence, must necessarily depend upon their acquiring certain qualifications here ; and

the salvation of the Gospel cannot be promised to those who do not esteem it worthy their exertions to cultivate its seed in their hearts. Indeed, (to use the beautiful expressions of Tillotson,) “ it  
 “ were unfit that so excellent and glorious  
 “ a reward as the Gospel promises, should  
 “ stoop down, like fruit upon a full-laden  
 “ bough, to be plucked by every idle and  
 “ wanton hand ; that Heaven should be  
 “ prostituted to the lazy desires and faint  
 “ wishes, to the cheap and ordinary en-  
 “ deavours of slothful men. God,” he  
 adds, “ will not so much disparage eternal  
 “ life and happiness, as to bestow it upon  
 “ those who have conceived so low an  
 “ opinion of it, as not to think it worth  
 “ the labouring for.” \*

In these circumstances, how very consolatory is the concluding verse of the parable ; and how plainly does it shew

\* Tillotson's sixth Sermon, Vol. I.

that the momentous concern of eternal life is yet in the power of every individual ; that the exertions requisite are not troublesome, nor very great, but that every thing may be accomplished by sincerity and perseverance ! “ And others “ fell on good ground, and did yield “ fruit, that sprang up and increased, and “ brought forth, some thirty, and some “ sixty, and some an hundred. And these “ are they which are sown on good “ ground, such as hear the word and receive it, and bring forth fruit.” Or, as St Luke expresses it in the Gospel for this day, “ that on the good ground are “ they which, in an honest and good “ heart, having heard the word, keep it “ and bring forth fruit with patience.”— It is not in the power of human language to convey sentiments more liberal, or more evidently just. We are not here told of particular opinions in religion, or

of any feelings and emotions which may depend upon natural constitution. We are at once referred to the voice of Conscience, and are commissioned to listen with an attentive ear to the report which it brings. We are asked whether we give our minds to the words of instruction, and endeavour to practise the lessons which we have received. Do we keep "the word" which we have heard? Or, do we steadily frame our conduct on those principles which we know to be true? Are our hearts "honest and good?" Do our consciences bring no accusation against us of wilful perversity and disingenuousness of conduct? Have we humility enough to be told of our errors, and rectitude enough to amend them? If this be the case, my brethren, if our spirits are of this docile character, we may be assured that the seed of life will find its way into



them, and that it will not fail to produce an harvest “fitted for immortality!”

That we may not be too much alarmed with the notion of what is expected from us, and that we may repose with tranquil minds on the consciousness of upright intention, it is salutary to attend to the expression which marks the different proportions of the fruit produced. “They “which are sown on good ground hear “the word, and receive it, and bring forth “fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and “some an hundred.”—This variety may arise from many accidental circumstances of condition, of information, of abilities,—and one person may thus attain a much higher progress in piety and virtue than another; yet, wherever there is the good soil, or the “honest and good heart,” there will be fruit in some proportion,—and that fruit will finally be gathered into the garner of God! This, in truth, is the mighty



object to which all piety and goodness finally aspire ; and this the prospect which carries them with dignity and firmness through the temptations and disorders of the world. It is this high prospect of future exaltation which encourages them now “ to bring forth fruit with patience,” and which lifts the eyes of the good above the fleeting shadows of the present life—“ for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal !”

A very interesting view is given us in another parable immediately following, of the silent, and often unnoticed progress of a pious life, from its first beginnings, to that lofty consummation which awaits it. The image is the same as that in the parable which I have illustrated, and it is applied in a beautiful manner, to point out the tranquillity with which every man, who aims at performing his duty, ought to look forward to that last hour, which,

while it carries the appearance of destruction, is sent by a watchful Providence to complete the great object of his destination.—“And he said, So is the kingdom of  
 “ God, as if a man should cast seed into  
 “ the ground, and should sleep, and rise  
 “ night and day, and the seed should  
 “ spring and grow up, he knoweth not  
 “ how. For the earth bringeth forth  
 “ fruit of herself, first the blade, then the  
 “ ear, after that the full corn in the ear.  
 “ But when the fruit is brought forth, im-  
 “ mediately he putteth in the sickle, be-  
 “ cause the harvest is come.”

A similar image is applied in the verses which follow, to the progress of the Gospel in the world, which bears, indeed, no faint analogy to that gradual advancement towards perfection to be traced in the life of a good man.—“ And he said,  
 “ Whereunto shall we liken the king-  
 “ dom of God, or with what comparison

“ shall we compare it? It is like a grain  
 “ of mustard seed, which, when it is sown  
 “ in the earth, is less than all the seeds that  
 “ be in the earth. But when it is sown,  
 “ it groweth up, and becometh greater  
 “ than all herbs, and shooteth out great  
 “ branches, so that the fowls of the air  
 “ may lodge under the shadow of it.”  
 These words, as applied to the progress  
 of the Gospel, have undoubtedly been  
 prophetic; and if it is a striking argu-  
 ment in support of Christianity, to com-  
 pare its influences upon human society,  
 so extensive and so constantly increas-  
 ing, with the apparent insignificance of  
 its origin, it must add no small weight to  
 this argument to find, that all these pro-  
 digious consequences were from the be-  
 ginning foreseen by its Author; and that,  
 while he himself had not where to lay his  
 head, he could still predict, that the future  
 generations of men would yet seek for

shelter under the shadow of that tree which he was then sowing in the earth.

Unto us, my brethren, who have been born beneath its branches, and to whom it is given to know “the mysteries of the kingdom of God,” may he now of his goodness grant, according to the expressions with which our Saviour commonly closes his parables, that “seeing we may see, and “hearing we may understand,”—that, as “we hear the word, we may receive it, and “bring forth fruit,”—that we may “take heed to what we hear, since with what “measure we mete, it shall be measured “to us, and to them that diligently hear, “shall more be given,”—and that, while we ponder the invaluable truths which have been conveyed to us under this simple form, as “we have ears to hear, so “we may hear!”

## DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE CHARITY OF THE GOSPEL.\*

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2 COR. xiii. 8.

*“ Charity never faileth.”*

IN the splendid passage, my brethren, from which these words are taken, and which you have this day heard from the altar,—the Apostle begins with enforcing the necessity of Charity, as an essential part of Christian virtue, and then describes its influence on the duties of social life. In the text, he proceeds fur-

\* Preached on Quinquagesima Sunday.



ther to point out its permanence and stability ; and, while all other virtues and eminent qualities are only steps of advancement to some greater perfection, “ Charity (he affirms) never faileth.” To this view of the subject I am desirous at present to direct your attention, as it may both lead us to a discovery of the exact nature of the principle which the Apostle here so powerfully recommends, and as it will open some interesting views of the system of Christianity.

In the first place, when we throw our eyes upon the scene of human existence, every thing which we see around us appears to contain a principle of failure. Man and his employments,—systems of Empire,—systems of Religion,—the Universe itself,—seem destined only for a temporary being ; and all that we behold most splendid and attractive, we cannot but be aware is only for a season. Amidst this con-

course of shadows, however beautiful and glittering, we must often feel ourselves dissatisfied and sad ; and it is natural for us to inquire, whether there is any one principle in life which is not destined to submit to the general decay. In making this examination, we shall find, that all the efforts of human ambition,—all the exercise of mere abilities,—perish without producing any permanent effects, or that their lasting influence is commonly very different from what they designed ; that the influence of vice, however fatally extensive, yet shrinks from observation, as if conscious of its final degradation and overthrow ;—that all the brilliant acquirements of the human mind, and all the exertions of genius, are yet only imperfect employments of powers, which have not received their last improvement ; that our views of Religion are inadequate and low, when compared to the lofty object

at which they aim ; that “ we know but  
“ in part, and prophecy but in part, and  
“ that when that which is perfect is come,  
“ that which is in part shall be done  
“ away.” Thus, even that principle of our  
nature, and those discoveries of Revela-  
tion, which point to an higher and a per-  
manent order of existence, proclaim their  
own incompleteness and instability, no  
less than the decay of all those purposes  
and affections which extend not beyond  
the bounds of mortal life.

Is there, then, among all the operations  
and the affections of man, any one which  
has the seal of stability affixed to it ? Is  
there any one principle of our nature,  
which, in all periods of society, and amidst  
all the passing phantoms of the world,  
seems to have a real and substantial  
form ? We cannot place it in the desire of  
human distinction, or in any of those exer-  
tions for present good, which lose their

object even while it is within their grasp ; we cannot place it even in many of the nobler efforts of Virtue, which, however admirable in themselves, are yet accommodated to the present life as a state of trial and school of probation, and not to what we believe will be our final condition ; we cannot either place it, we perceive, in religious Faith, which, although it looks forward to a perfect state of being, shall itself also be lost in greater perfection. We must seek for it, then, my brethren, in the principle of Humanity, in that tie of affection which binds man to man,—in that sympathetic feeling which makes the interest of others our own,—and which, amidst all the weakness and vices of our nature, has yet, in every age, presented one pleasing form on which the eye of contemplation might rest ; one vestige of the celestial origin from which we sprung not yet quite ef-

faced, and to which the world, notwithstanding all its mutability, can yet afford opportunities of exertion, which have ever been felt as solid and unperishing good. Whenever we cultivate the sentiments of love, or seek to promote the good of mankind, we feel that we are entering upon a course which brings both immediate and permanent satisfaction. We then feel that we live, not only in our own feeble existence, but in the affections and breasts of our fellow-creatures ; and connecting ourselves, not with the fleeting dreams of worldly good, but with the hearts and the souls of mankind, we are conscious of a stability of happiness which cannot be torn from us!

It is in this manner that, in all ages, the truly benevolent and humane have ever believed that they have secured real good. Even while they might have but a very shadowy perception of a fu-



ture state of being, they have felt that there was something really excellent in their present condition ; and, while their Hope and their Faith might not be awakened by the Gospel, they yet had an intuitive perception, that “ Charity never faileth.”

It is, however, to the Gospel, and to the faith which it inspires, that we are, in the second place, to ascribe the perfection of Charity ; and however noble the efforts of humanity may have been in former periods of the world, there is yet something in the description of the Apostle, which we feel cannot apply to them. We must ascribe to the faith of the Gospel that inspiring conviction, that man is not the creature of a day ; that every individual who breathes the breath of life is the destined heir of an eternal existence ; and that all the weakness and infirmities of our present being cannot smother the lurking spark of immortality.

From this sentiment, my brethren, the charity of the Christian puts on the elevated form ascribed to it by the Apostle. It is not only in public life, when the good of a nation, or of the world, warms the imagination of the Patriot or the Philanthropist,—it is not only amidst domestic affections, when the kind instincts of nature give a delightful colouring to all the exertions of duty,—nor is it only where our feelings are interested by suffering virtue, or by some striking appearance of human calamity,—it is not in such scenes alone, that the universal and omnipresent spirit of Christian charity finds itself animated into action. Wherever it looks upon the face of man, there it beholds one for whom the Son of God died, and to whom he has proclaimed immortal life. In this high aspect, all the littleness of present existence, all its darkness and defilement vanish as if they had

no being: the obscurities and the deformities of poverty, the narrowness and weakness of vulgar understandings, even the degradations of vice, cannot oppose the sublime interest with which the sight of every thing human inspires it; and in the most bounded sphere of life, it can yet exercise those warm and animated affections, which, lighted by the torch of Heaven, descend to bless the shivering outcasts of mortality.

It is this circumstance which gives to the Charity of the Gospel that constant and watchful character, which, according to the description of the Apostle, carries it into every department of conduct. He describes it as existing not in those actions chiefly where we commonly think it is only to be found. We may "give our goods to the poor," or "our body to be burned," and yet "have not charity." These splendid acts of bounty, or of martyrdom,

may possibly proceed from the weakness of human vanity. But when, deeply feeling the nature of that sacred tie which connects us even with the weakest or the worst of mankind, we “suffer long, and are kind,” amidst their errors and offences,—when, triumphing in the accomplishments and virtues of others, we are superior to the low selfishness of “envy,”—when fearful to esteem ourselves more than our brethren, we “vaunt” not in vain glory: when, attentive even to the least feelings of every human being, we are careful on no occasion to “behave ourselves unseemly,”—when, amidst our constant regard to the rights of others, we push not to the utmost the pursuit of “our own,”—when we are “not easily provoked,” “when we think no evil:”—in these instances, my brethren, which penetrate into every scene and action of human life, we can most surely indicate the prevalence in



our souls of that deep and delicate sense of the value and the claims of our common nature, which springs from the “never-failing charity” of the Gospel.

In the third place, the words which follow the text, open a wide view of the ultimate scope and tendency of Christianity. “Charity never faileth ;” but “whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ;” “whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Now we see through “a glass darkly, but then face to face.” Can it be more clearly shewn to us, that the chief part of Religion consists in the unwearied cultivation of all the charitable affections? These alone will never fail. All our present modes and forms of belief will, in a future state of being, vanish before the clear light of actual vision ; lines of distinction, which may now seem to us like the gulf that se-



parates Heaven from Hell, will disappear, probably, like the clouds which hover before the sun ; all their imperfect conceptions of Faith will then be illuminated to the pious and the sincere ; but while all the misapprehensions which divided them on earth shall for ever be done away, the bonds of Charity which united them shall be strengthened through the ages of Eternity.

How true is it, then, that the foretaste of heavenly felicity may be anticipated on earth ; that the character which unites the angels and the archangels in the presence of the Almighty Father, may, amidst our human imperfection, be partly our own ; and that when “ we suffer long, “ and are kind, envy not, vaunt not ourselves, do not behave ourselves un- “ seemly, seek not our own, are not “ easily provoked, think no evil, rejoice “ not in iniquity, but rejoice in the truth,

“bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things;” even amidst the darkness of our present being, in which we “see only as through a glass,” we shall breathe the spirit of those who “behold their Maker face to face;” and that, while Hope and Faith are only our guides to that bright assembly, the Charity which we cultivate here, will there, too, be our greatest reward and glory!

## DISCOURSE X.

ON RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT.\*

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MATTHEW, iv. 1.

*“ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into  
“ the wilderness.”*

AT this season we are summoned by the Church to suspend, in some degree, the usual course of our thoughts and employments, and to set apart a portion of our time for meditation and recollection.—Here, as in every other department of conduct, the example of our Saviour is

\* Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.

held out to us; and from that world, which is the great field of our temptations, and too often, alas ! of our fall, we are required to follow Him into the wilderness, and there to become witnesses of that strength which he summoned up in the hours of abstinence and retirement, and by which he was enabled to defeat the attempts of the spiritual Enemy of man.

To those who are much wedded to common occupations and pleasures, the notion even of a temporary secession from their allurements, appears to be dark and disagreeable. They are generally acknowledged, indeed, to lead to disappointment, yet those who are the most sensible of their fallacies, are, perhaps, the most loath to desert them ; and the distraction of thought which accompanies them, while it is quite devoid of real enjoyment, yet disqualifies the mind from deriving any satisfaction from con-

templation and retirement. At the same time, my brethren, there are many circumstances which shew, that an occasional retreat from the hurry of our lives is agreeable to our natural dispositions ; and however the worldly habits which we have fostered may obstruct the cultivation of these dispositions, they are yet seldom entirely eradicated.

It is not often that the world possesses so strong a hold of our thoughts as to make us unwilling to quit it, at least in imagination. We may not have the courage really to seclude ourselves from its enticements, but we feign to ourselves pictures of seclusion which seem to us more delightful than all that ambition or vanity can offer ; and in the works of fiction, and the descriptions of poetry, we are pleased to contemplate those representations of humble life, which, remote from the strong glare of society, reposes amidst



the simple forms of rural and domestic tranquillity.

The same general taste appears, likewise, from the attachment which all men, in some degree, possess for the beauties of Nature, and for the Country. Long habits of intercourse with the world may, indeed, frequently incapacitate us from enjoying these with a true relish, yet we look back with regret upon the time when they were delightful to us; and we are often willing to hope that the time may again arrive, when we shall retire from all the labours and all the dissipations of men, into those quiet scenes which still reflect from their bosom the infant innocence of Creation.

Even while we are ourselves incapable of sharing in these pleasures, we yet admire those who have hearts alive to them; we believe that in their minds the seeds of genius and of taste are sown; and

we reckon upon finding in their characters the amiable and the gentle virtues. We admire them when they have their minds in harmony with Nature in all its aspects ; when they not only delight to contemplate its softer and more regular features, but even to be “ led up of the “ Spirit into the wilderness,” and can find in desolation itself, something which touches the higher chords of their souls. It is in the world of Man, indeed, that we are conscious we ought to act ; but to those who love at times to retreat from that crowded stage, and to give a scope to their thoughts in the boundless World of Nature, we are apt to ascribe spirits of a loftier cast, and to believe that they will bring into their conduct among men, the character and the temper of a more exalted order of beings.

There is still another principle which gives to Retirement a charm, which we

might not at first expect to find in it : I mean the principle of our social nature itself. Man is indeed born for society, but how often does human society fail of accomplishing its true purposes ! It is in it that all the malignant and all the selfish passions find their scope ; and it is frequently in retirement alone, that a mind, disgusted with the spectacle of human folly and crime, can recover its tone, and can again be restored to the genuine sympathies of the heart. What Man has exasperated and inflamed, the benignity of Nature soothes and appeases, and insinuates into the heart the milder feelings of charity and candour !—There is, too, a society which follows us into retirement, that, to hearts of sensibility, possesses a peculiar charm : The society of those who are no longer to be met with among men ; the wise and the good who have left us for higher scenes ; the parents whom we

venerated, or the companions whom we loved, and with whom, in our hours of retreat from the vulgar current of existence, we still seem to enjoy a pure and sacred converse !

Such, my brethren, are some of the feelings which force even the most dissipated to acknowledge, that occasional seclusion is congenial to the mind of man, and which evidently point out the intention of his Creator to be, that this tendency is not to be thwarted, but to be improved. It is, indeed, liable to much perversion. Some minds, of a delicate texture, indulge it to an extent, which unqualifies them for the business and the enjoyments of social life. Others quit the world from disappointed ambition, and, amidst the peace of nature itself, brood over their gloomy discontent. It is only when they contribute to moral improvement, that our various natural dispositions

can ever be directed to the ends for which, we may be sure, they were principally designed. The moral and religious advantages which follow from a wise use of Retirement, are of a kind sufficiently obvious.

In the *first* place, Retirement removes us at a due distance from the world, and enables us to estimate rightly and dispassionately the different pursuits of life. When we are in the midst of these, we are carried on by the common stream,—our passions are inflamed by those of the multitude,—and we appreciate the objects of pursuit, not according to their real value, but as they are valued by those around us. It is surprising how manageable our passions are in themselves, and how much of their strength is owing to the influence of society. Remove the contagion of the opinions of men, and how insignificant would all the ob-



jects appear of Avarice or Ambition ! Even the love of Pleasure, which seems more the work of Nature, would yet be confined within very moderate bounds, did not imagination and vanity contribute to extend them. Whenever we retreat a little from the scene, we gain some insight into the delusion which is practised upon us ; we find that we have been acting, not from ourselves, but from the contact of others ; and we perceive that we are only pursuing shadows which will soon, alas ! vanish in the grave ! —Of that grave, the silence of retirement reminds us, and we already begin to feel somewhat of that separation from all our ardent pursuits, which, at no distant period, must be accomplished for ever.

When the loud noise of man is shut out, the voice of conscience is heard ; and those calls of duty which are so often neglected amidst the tumult of the pas-

sions, can make themselves be listened to and regarded. We then feel what kind of occupations alone are suited to our nature; what only the heart will approve of; and what, among all our perishing operations, alone seem worthy to extend beyond the present limits of our being. From the sacred ground of retreat we look upon the world, not as the theatre in which honours are distributed, but as the field of combat on which they are won; not as the Palace of Delight in which the senses are to be gratified, and the imagination indulged; but as the Temple of Reason and of Virtue, where the understanding is to be employed, and the heart to be improved. Before the shining path, which now opens upon our view, we behold even the darkness of the grave dispelled; and we return into it with the determination of men who feel, that this alone is the path to immortal honour.

This consideration, my brethren, brings

me, in the *second* place, to say, that, as Retirement removes us at a due distance from present objects, so likewise it opens to us a nearer view of those of religion. It is, indeed, only when we shut out the former from our thoughts, that we can catch any glimpse of the latter which is at all steady and clear. When we look merely on the scene of human life, and have all our passions interested in the pursuits which it affords, it is impossible that any higher system of being can acquire in our minds a character of sufficient distinctness and certainty. We may continue to believe, indeed, what we have been taught to believe; but we can have no firm impression of its truth, and shall often be unable to distinguish well between the principles of faith and the prejudices of infancy.

To acquire a distinct impression, and a deep feeling of those invaluable prin-

ciples, let us, for a time, shut out the world from our thoughts; let us follow the Son of God into the wilderness; and, in the solitude of our hearts, and amid the magnificence of Nature, let us listen to that voice which will, indeed, assure us, that there is a loftier order of existence to which we belong; and that, when all the perplexed scenes of human society shall come to a close, and the fabric of Creation shall itself decay, there is yet a spirit in man which will survive the universal fall, and there is yet a society surrounding the throne of God, to which he will be for ever joined.

Such, my brethren, are the moral and the religious impressions, to which, in these hours of meditation and retirement, we are called by the offices of our Church; and such is the use which we ought to make of that remarkable circumstance in the history of our Lord,—his retreat into



the wilderness.—He possessed all the treasures of wisdom, and all the strength of a superior nature: yet, as a man, he was destined to act among men; and before he entered upon his eventful course, he retired to consider with himself the temptations which lay before him, and the enterprise which was given him to perform. It was not to seclude himself from the world that he retired, but to prepare himself for its conflicts and its duties; it was not to indulge in the visions of enthusiasm, but to return from the contemplation of God, and the intercourse of the Spirit, confirmed in his resolution of accomplishing the salvation of man. He thus exhibits to us both the necessity of private meditation, and its connection with the duties of life; and in the strength which he seemed to derive from it, in defeating those temptations with which he was soon so violently assailed; and, in



the unbroken dignity of his future course, we are encouraged to hope that the noblest fruits may spring from the wise cultivation of seasons of retirement.

May that Spirit, by which he was led up into the wilderness, watch over us in these hours of thought, and lead our meditations into wisdom and peace: may it inspire us with the firm resolution to overcome the temptations which lie in the way of our duty, and animate us with that fervour of piety, which will say to every one of them, "Get thee hence Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt not worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve!" May we be enabled to obtain the victory; and, at our last hour, when the world and all its seductions are about to leave us, may "Angels come and minister to us," and bring us the blessed assurances of the favour of God!

## DISCOURSE XI.

### ON RELIGIOUS MEDITATION. \*

**JOB, iv. 17.**

*“ Shall mortal man be more just than God?*

*“ Shall a man be more pure than his*

*“ Maker?”*

**T**HERE is nothing, my brethren, so conducive to the acquisition of an even and tranquil spirit, as the intimate persuasion and assurance of the Divine perfections. This habit of thought we can acquire only from frequent and serious Meditation. In the world we are apt to for-

\* Preached in Lent.

get God. Our minds are occupied with the passing current of events, and in the slight view which we commonly take of them, they seem too disorderly and irregular to suggest to us any fixed notions of a Divine superintendence. In the world, too, we forget all the higher views of excellence. We try our own conduct, and that of others, by a very imperfect standard ; and when, in the course of our lives, we come to suffer from that “time and chance which happeneth unto all,” or from the effects of our own misconduct, we are then apt to quarrel with the arrangements of Providence, and to sink into discontent and repining. The great cure for this infirmity of mind is pious contemplation ; and although, perhaps, in the outset of our reflections, we may find ourselves lost in the immensity and obscurity of the ways of God, yet there are certain land-marks which soon ap-

pear to guide our course, amidst the darkness of Providence, and the consciousness of our own disorders.

It is this effect of Meditation in gradually bringing light from terror and obscurity, which is probably meant to be represented in the well-known and very striking passage which introduces the words of the text. “Now a thing was secretly brought to me,” says Eliphaz, “and mine ear received a little thereof. “In thoughts from the visions of the “night, when deep sleep falleth on men, “fear came upon me and trembling, “which made all my bones to shake. “Then a spirit passed before my face; “the hair of my flesh stood up; it stood “still; but I could not discern the form “thereof: an image was before mine eyes; “there was silence; and I heard a voice, “saying, Shall mortal man be more just



“than God? Shall a man be more pure  
“than his Maker?”

In the first place, my brethren, we are led by Meditation into just views of the Divine government. From the crowd of discordant events, and the conflict of human passions, it leads us into the tabernacle of God; and if, at first, we tremble as we enter, and discern not the form of that Spirit of Righteousness which passes before us, we are yet soothed by the voice, which assures us that there is justice and purity in all his dealings with men. From the serenity of his holy hill, we soon perceive a principle of order amidst the seeming chaos around us; the traces, at least, of a more perfect administration: prosperity and success commonly attending virtue even here; punishment following after sin;—goodness rising purer from its severest trials; and Faith, amidst the wildest storms of time, fixing its eye



upon the star of immortality; and even "the valley of the shadow of death" brightening with "the day-spring from on high."

According to their habits of thought, these views present themselves with more or less clearness to different individuals; but to all, Meditation may convey something "secretly, and their ear may receive a little thereof." To all, it will present a different aspect of things, from that which appears on the shifting face of events; and the moral feelings of the heart silently point to a more perfect retribution, than is seen in the disorderly course of human affairs. "When we commune with our own hearts and are still," we feel that, unless there were a moral arrangement in the system of the universe, unless, amid every apparent deviation, it were conducted on principles of unerring righteousness—notwithstanding

all its external magnificence and beauty, it would be found wanting in the balance even of Human judgment. The thought is impious, my brethren, and “fear” comes upon us and trembling, which “makes all our bones to shake” as it passes before us ;—but the darkness of so shapeless an image is relieved by the voice of Divine assurance, which says, “ Shall mortal man be more just than God ? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ? ”

These words at once remove every cloud from the face of Providence ; they bring a conviction to the heart, equal to the evidence of actual vision, that righteousness *must* be the rule of the Divine government ; that if no other rule can satisfy man, much less can any other satisfy God ; and that he who erected in the human breast a standard of judgment, from which even his own proceedings cannot escape, must, in the final issue of

things, be found to have “done right.” It is thus, that, in the depth of affliction, when we are apt to think ourselves the victims of unmerited sorrow, the contemplations of piety will restore calm to our wounded spirits : they will recal our confidence in God, and will assure us, that, under his righteous rule, every thing will finally be well.

It is not only, however, amidst the perplexed appearances of human life, that Meditation restores to us the balance of our souls : it brings us peace, likewise, amidst the distractions which arise from the consciousness of our own infirmities and sins. Here, too, in a second view, the vision of Eliphaz represents the natural conflicts of the human soul.—“In thoughts from the “visions of the night, when deep sleep “falleth on men,” how often is Conscience kept awake, while the dark “image” of Divine vengeance “stands still” before it, and is “before its eyes,” although

it cannot “discern the form thereof?” It is this horrible and shapeless form which stands by the bed of impenitent guilt, and tells its victims, that, although man may be ignorant of their offences, yet there is one to whom they are known, and who will by “no means spare the guilty;” nor can all the prosperities or flatteries of the world save them from those “nightly fears,” which “make all their bones to shake,” and “the hair of their flesh to stand up.” It is this, too, which sometimes clouds the breast of the comparatively innocent with terrors that belong only to hardened wickedness, yet, in some shape or other, are known to every human heart; for who can look back upon the course of existence which he has run, amidst the consciousness of his weakness and frailties, without “fear” coming upon him,—or forward into futurity without “trembling?” It was this frightful spectre, which, in



the ancient world, appeared to descend from Heaven upon the shuddering nations ; and in all the indistinct and varied aspects which the imagination of ignorance could suggest, seemed even to thirst for blood, and only to be appeased by the sanguinary horrors of the altar !—Yet, in the darkest periods of man, the soothing voice of Religion has been heard ; and, from the consciousness of its own guilt or infirmity, the heart has ever sought refuge, amidst the very awe which they inspired, in the contemplation of the attributes of God. A gentler spirit has descended in the hours of thought and of penitence, and brooded over the soul of ignorant and sinful man ; and the weakness of a mortal nature has felt that it was allied to Almighty goodness,—and that, if itself was impure and imperfect, the God who made it was perfect and pure ! These were the meditations of Wisdom, even in the worst



of times. They brightened the contemplations of the thoughtful sage ; and the lofty conception of the Divine excellence dispelled, in part, the gloom of human fears. " Shall mortal man," said the voice to Eliphaz, " shall mortal man be more just " than God ? Shall a man be more pure " than his Maker ? Behold he put no " trust in his servants, and his angels he " charged with folly. How much less in " them that dwell in houses of clay, whose " foundation is in the dust !"

There is, however, my Christian brethren, a third view of the subject, which is, in a more peculiar manner, applicable to us. The vision of Eliphaz is the vision of unenlightened man, to whom " a " thing is brought secretly, and whose " ear receiveth a little thereof." The meditations of the Christian breathe a higher spirit, and assume a more perfect character. In *his* visions of the night, the spirit

which passes before him is not one, the form whereof he cannot discern, but it is like none other than the Son of God; and that voice which speaks to him in silence tells him, not only of the justice and the purity of his Maker, but still more of his compassion and paternal love; and says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" It tells the sorrowful and desponding, not only that all *must* be right in the administration of justice, but that all *is* merciful and kind in the paternal government of God: "for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." It assures the sinner, that there is mercy with the Most High; that if "the wicked man will turn away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and will do that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive;" and it calls on the

pious and the just to throw away every oppressive fear ; to feel secure that their infirmities will not be mentioned against them ; but that, if they proceed in the course on which they have entered, their “ path shall be as the shining light, which “ shineth more and more unto the perfect “ day.”

In the visions of the Christian mourner, that holy form appears which was borne by him who was “ a man of sorrows, “ and acquainted with grief ;” but who is now “ made perfect by suffering,” and who points to the eternal glories into which he hath preceded his followers. The guilty man who longs for forgiveness, but knows not what atonement can satisfy the justice of Heaven, and, in the blackness of his thoughts, would even “ give his first-born “ for his transgression, the fruit of his body “ for the sin of his soul,”—beholds, in the meditations of the Gospel, the ransom which conscience blindly explored, paid once and

for ever, sees the purest blood of Heaven itself streaming for his deliverance on the Cross, and joins the voice of penitence and hope which cried in that awful hour, "Lord remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." The good man beholds the Shepherd of Israel walking before him, and leading him in the right way, and calling him back from his wanderings, and gently supporting him when he is ready to fall, and comforting him with his "rod and his staff," even "in the valley of the shadow of death," and making him at last to lie down in those "green pastures," and beside "the still waters," where there is unfading repose for all the people of God!

Such, my brethren, are the happy fruits of Religious Meditation, and such are the heavenly contemplations to which the Church now summons us, while she unfolds, to receive us, her "everlasting doors."



She calls us from the turmoils of mortal man, to consider the eternal course of the justice of God; from the afflicting consciousness of the impurity of the creature, to the ennobling contemplation of the purity of the Creator; and, still more, she calls us, amidst all the afflictions of time, to repose with perfect trust in the Paternal administration of God; amidst all our sins and infirmities, to know, that with him there is forgiveness and strength, and ever to fix the eye of faith on the glorious Captain of our Salvation, who goes before us in every trial, from every sin summons us to repentance, and points to the path of duty in every station of man, as to the infallible course of “glory, “and honour, and immortality.”

Let not the world, then, my brethren, deprive you of these lofty meditations. “Commune with your own hearts upon “your bed and be still;” and if, “in thoughts



“from the visions of the night,” you tremble at the spectre of your own unworthiness, and at the voice which tells you of the justice and the purity of God, there is yet a greater voice which speaks to you from the Gospel, and assures you that “God is love,” and that, amidst all the infirmities of human nature, the penitent spirit “that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in it !”

## DISCOURSE XII.

ON THE MORAL LAW. \*

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EXODUS, xx. 1, 2.

*“ And God spake all these words, saying,  
“ I am the Lord thy God, which have  
“ brought thee out of the land of Egypt,  
“ and out of the house of bondage.”*

IT was with these words, my brethren, as you well know, that the precepts of religion and morality were first introduced to the Jews. That singular people had lately been delivered from a state of cruel and hopeless slavery ; they had seen the divine power exerted in the

\* Preached in Lent.

complete discomfiture of their enemies; and now, under the guidance of their patriotic Prophet, they had advanced into the wilderness of Mount Sinai. Here, as we are informed, “ it came to pass on “ the third day in the morning, that “ there were thunders and lightnings, and “ a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the “ voice of the trumpet exceeding loud : so “ that all the people that was in the camp “ trembled. And Moses brought forth “ the people out of the camp to meet with “ God, and they stood at the nether part of “ the Mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord “ descended upon it in fire, and the smoke “ thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked “ greatly. And when the voice of the “ trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder “ and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And God spake

“ all these words, saying, I am the Lord  
“ thy God, which have brought thee out  
“ of the land of Egypt, out of the house  
“ of bondage.”

The laws which follow this solemn introduction, and which obtained so astonishing a sanction of divine authority, have, in every succeeding age, been received as the most sacred compend of human duty. The people to whom they were given were instructed, by their Prophet, “ to teach them diligently unto  
“ their children, and to talk of them  
“ when they sat in their houses, and when  
“ they walked by the way, and when they  
“ lay down, and when they rose up.” The Divine Author of our faith renewed their sanction, and illustrated their spirit; and we, my brethren, at this season, behold the interesting spectacle of the little children among us, assembling in the house of God, and repeating those words of au-

thority, which were originally uttered by the voice of Omnipotence.

It is pleasing to observe the minds of the young thus early imbued with principles, on which all the dignity and happiness of their future lives depends, and from so auspicious a morning, we naturally prognosticate a favourable day. We must not, however, forget, that it is not sufficient to instruct them merely in the words of duty, without endeavouring to make them comprehend the spirit of those laws which they are taught ; and it may not, perhaps, be an unprofitable exercise for ourselves, to look back upon that ancient form of Moral and Religious instruction, with which we have been familiar from our childhood ; but of which, from that very cause, we may have neglected to examine the import, or to feel the value. I trust, therefore, that I shall not be employing your time uselessly, if, in the present and



in another discourse, I should offer some illustrations of the truths contained in the Ten Commandments.

The foundation of all sound and consistent virtue is Religion; and, accordingly, its precepts are first inculcated in these rules of duty. In the solemn words with which they open, the principle of Religion is contained. This is gratitude,—gratitude on the part of man for the benefits he has received from God. The people to whom these words were originally addressed, were reminded in them of that peculiar blessing which they had lately experienced, the wonderful deliverance which had been wrought for them, and their selection from the other inhabitants of the earth, to be the chosen nation of Heaven. “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

In their immediate application, these expressions were, indeed, peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the Jews ; but they contain a principle which applies equally to all the race of mankind. Who, indeed, that feels the value of existence,—the importance of a rational and a moral nature,—the innumerable blessings of society,—but must have some sense of gratitude to the Being from whom all those benefits are derived ? Is it not at once apparent, indeed, that this must be our highest duty ; and, on the very threshold of Religion, do we not perceive the truth of our Saviour's assertion, that “ the “ first and great commandment ” must be, that we should “ love the Lord our God ? ” As we are men, therefore, we must recognise this first of duties ; and, accordingly, we find that it was recognised even under all the darkness of idolatrous Superstition, by those who trained their

their minds in the discipline of wisdom and virtue. What excuse, then, have we, my brethren, if we do not recognise it, on whom that light has shone, which has dispelled the darkness of Religion,—and has brightened all the future prospects of our being,—and has shewn that our present blessings are the least for which we have cause to be grateful? As we are Christians, the words which were spoken from the sacred Mount apply to us in a still higher sense than to the people who heard them; to us who have obtained, not a temporal, but a spiritual deliverance; who have been freed from worse than Egyptian bondage,—from the slavery of sin, from the gloom of superstition, and from the horrors of the grave! If we permit our thoughts to dwell on these blessings, we must perceive the obligations which arise from them; and shall find, that we

are really without excuse, if they become not the guiding principles of our minds.

The Four Commandments which form the First Table, are not any extension of the principle on which Religion rests: they are merely certain cautionary admonitions, adapted to the weakness of Human Nature. In the two first, we are taught perfection in piety; in the third, reverence for the Deity; and in the fourth, to accustom our minds habitually to Religious reflection.

In the first place, then, it is not so much in the capacity of acquiring just opinions or sentiments in religion, that we are commonly defective, as in that of rendering them a regular principle of conduct. Whenever they are suggested to us, we must perceive their truth, and feel their importance; yet our minds are in constant danger of being misled from them, and our actions too often proceed from

principles of a very opposite character. In different ages of the world, this weakness has shewn itself in different forms. In ancient times, it led into all the errors of idolatry, and sheltered itself under the superstitions to which it gave birth. When men were desirous to follow the dictates of their passions, and to desert those moral laws which were comprehended in the belief of ONE equal Law-giver and Judge, they had recourse to the supposition of other Gods, who were the patrons of injustice and impurity. The circumstances of those times gave to such suppositions a plausibility which now cannot attend them ; and hence in those ages the importance, in a literal sense, of the commandments which required men to persevere in the worship of the one true God, and to resist the temptations of idolatry.

These temptations, indeed, do not now



exist in their original form ; yet human nature, my brethren, is still the same ; and if we do not now actually entertain the opinion that there are more Gods than one, or fall down before images which our own hands have framed, yet I fear we too often lose sight of the supremacy of God, and fall down before the idols which we have erected in our hearts. When we live but little to God, and much to the world, can we deny that we are giving ourselves up to the service of more than one master ? or, when we are enslaved to vanity, or ambition, or covetousness, or sensuality, what are we but the degraded worshippers of the “ likenesses of things in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth ? ”

We are taught, then, in these Commandments, that our Religion is nothing, unless it be steady and consistent,—unless

it operate on our conduct, and evince that it has become a principle, by the sure test of action. To such pure and steady devotion alone are the blessings of Religion promised:—"For I, the Lord  
"thy God," it is said, "am a jealous God,  
"and visit the sins of the fathers upon  
"the children, unto the third and fourth  
"generations of them that hate me, and  
"shew mercy unto thousands of them  
"that love me and keep my command-  
"ments."

In the second place, that we may be enabled to act steadily from religious principle, we are required to fix in our minds a deep sense of the Majesty of God. The influence of the world and of our passions is apt to hide from us the authority of an invisible Being; and it requires reflection and thought, before we can become firmly impressed with it. Yet, till we acquire this habitual reverence for the

Deity, we shall scarcely have strength to resist those temptations to deviate from his laws, which meet us so constantly in our progress through life. In the literal sense of the Third Commandment, as forbidding every light and irreverent use of the *name* of God, a precept, undoubtedly, of much importance is contained ; but there is happily not so much necessity, in the present age, of enforcing it, in this view, as might have been requisite in times of less refinement. It is some proof of the progress of reason, if not of religion, that the shocking and absurd practice here alluded to has gone greatly into disuse, among those, at least, who are to be found in any reputable society,—and that it is esteemed as offensive as it is impious. This Commandment, however, may properly be extended to include the prohibition of every word, or thought, or action, which

supposes a disregard, or can diminish our reverence for the Divine presence and authority,—and as requiring us to cultivate every means by which a sense of that Holy Presence may be impressed upon our minds.

The chief of these means is, in the third place, shewn to be, habitual Religious reflection. It may seem wonderful, that we should reflect on religion so little. The Material Universe which surrounds us carries the constant impression of the wisdom, the greatness, and the goodness of God: human affairs, amidst all their perplexity, contain many indications of his Providence; and that future state of being, to which we are hastening, cannot be contemplated without a deep feeling that our greatest interests hang immediately upon Him. Notwithstanding all these calls to serious thought, it is still evident, that, without habits of regular meditation, we are apt

to lose sight of Religion entirely, and to be carried along without any nobler views in the vulgar current of the world. The *spirit* of the Commandment which we are now considering teaches us, that we ought regularly to occupy a portion of our time in religious meditation ; and it has *literally* appointed a Day on which the common business of life should be suspended ; and the minds of men should be elevated to a sense of the higher interests of their nature, and of the ties which connect them with that Almighty Being, who “ made heaven and earth, the “ sea, and all that in them is.”

Upon the importance of this sacred institution, I need not, my brethren, multiply words. There cannot be any doubt, that to it we owe almost all the pure religion which is to be found in the world, at least among the lower orders of society, who are doomed, by the necessities of their



condition, to a life of labour; and to whom the sun which rises on this Sacred day comes indeed "with healing on its wings," bringing them not only rest from their present toils, but, also, the highest hopes to which man can aspire. Those in the higher ranks, who sometimes imagine that they can dispense with the assistances of the Sabbath, ought to recollect, that there is no order of men more apt than themselves to forget the loftier destinations of their being, and to be lost in present enjoyments: but if the Sabbath were *only* important for "the man-servant and the maid-servant," for giving to the great body of mankind the principles of duty and the comforts of religion,—what shall we say of that unthinking folly which can dare to affront public opinion in its most sacred form, and, rather than suspend the course of a selfish and base dissipation, will not hesitate to

shake to their foundation, the strongest pillars on which the fabric of Society is reared?

I have thus endeavoured to point out the leading views which are contained in the first series of the Ten Commandments. These all refer either to the principle on which Religion rests, or to the means by which it may obtain a firm footing in the human mind. The whole together open a wide field for gratitude and admiration, and impress us deeply with a sense of that Divine goodness and condescension, which has thus brought itself within the reach of the devotion of man.

The occasion which has given rise to these observations, naturally suggests the following reflections.—We all wish that our children should be impressed with a sense of religious obligation, and should have their minds early formed to the love

of God and of his laws. In this view, how important is our example, and what influence will all the doctrines or the precepts which we teach them have upon their understandings or on their hearts, unless they see that we are ourselves worshippers of God “in spirit and in truth !” Let us then, my brethren, cultivate in our own souls dispositions of gratitude to Him for all his goodness ; let us give Him our hearts undivided and entire,—cast down those lying vanities which we are so prone to idolize,—ever retain a firm impression of his supreme authority,—and meditate on his laws, and reverence his sacred institutions. So shall he make our example a blessing unto the third and fourth generation of them that follow us, and shew mercy unto our children’s children !

To you, my young friends, the present occasion is one of unspeakable interest. You come here, in the infancy of

your being, to be made acquainted with Him who gave it you, and to be instructed in the duties which you owe him. If you are preserved in life, you have many things, indeed, to learn, before you can become an honour to your parents, or to the Country which gave you birth. Yet the knowledge you are now acquiring, is the most important you can ever gain; and, while you are made acquainted with your Maker and his laws, you are learning truths, of which death itself will not deprive you. Draw near, then, to that God, whom your fathers before you have worshipped, and He will draw near to you. Your fathers must leave you: their mortal part must descend to the grave: but your heavenly Father is ever with you: he ever “pitieth his children,” and “sheweth mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments!”

## DISCOURSE XIII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

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MATTHEW, xxii. 39.

*“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt  
“love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

IN a former discourse, my brethren, I requested your attention to a few observations, on that division of the Ten Commandments which relates to Religion. In the solemn words with which they open the principle of religion is contained, namely, gratitude to God for all his goodness to man. The Four first Com-



mandments inculcate a pure and perfect devotion ; reverence for the Divine authority ; and a regard for those sacred institutions, which, in condescension to the weakness of the human heart, have been appointed for the purpose of habitually directing its affections to their true and genuine object. The result of the whole is the conclusion of our Saviour, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

From these lofty meditations, the greatest to which the mind of man can aspire, we now descend into that world in which we live, and perceive the same principle of duty which connects us with God, likewise branching out into all the different relations in which we stand towards each other. The first Moral feelings of the heart resemble those of Religion: they are

the mixed emotions of gratitude and of reverence ; love mixed with awe ; the affections of a weak and a dependent being towards one on whom it depends, and under whose authority it lives. There is much wisdom, therefore, in placing the Commandment which requires duty to parents, immediately after those which relate to the duties of Religion ; and we may thus see the beautiful gradation by which religious and social duty run into each other.

It is likewise with great wisdom, that duty to parents is placed at the head of the Moral law, as it is not only the earliest, but, undoubtedly, one of the most important of duties ; and according as it is performed well or ill, we may judge of the soundness of the whole character.— It is with this law, more particularly, that you, my young friends, are concerned. You live under the protection and the guidance of your Parents, and to them

your eyes are directed as to the Fountains of your being, and the guardians of your early years. This is the state in which Nature has placed you, and it is here you are met by the first lessons of duty. “Honour thy father and thy mother” is the rule which you are taught before every other, and which you can most easily comprehend; and according to the regard which you give to it, we may form conjectures concerning your future progress in virtue. If you are regardless of this law, to which can we ever expect that you will attend? But if you are now obedient children, we can have little doubt that, in your progress through life, you will equally attach yourselves to all the other duties which your stations in society may require.—Perhaps, my young friends, you now sometimes wish that you were going forth into the world, and were freed from all the trammels of

Parental rule. Alas ! when you are advanced on the journey of life, how often will you look back to those quiet days which you now pass under the roofs of your parents ; and, when their venerable forms return to your imaginations, after, perhaps, they themselves have been laid in the dust, how mild will that authority then seem to have been, which never checked your innocent amusements, but only protected you from vice and folly ; and how bitter will be the reproaches of your consciences, if, which God forbid, you should ever feel that any part of your conduct contributed to “bring down their grey “hairs to the grave !”

Under family government, the infant mind is first trained to ready and affectionate obedience ; and in this view, likewise, there is much wisdom in placing the Commandment which we have been considering at the head of the laws of so-



cial duty, as it is by its means that those habits of self-command and moral restraint are best formed, which are so necessary for checking the irregular passions of the individual, and for preserving the peace and good order of society.

The first duty of men in society is, to abstain from injury ; and the Commandments to which we now come, bring forward a very perfect enumeration of the different kinds of injustice from which it becomes us to refrain. In this enumeration, the extreme cases are alone expressed ; but it is very easy to perceive under what head each of these cases may be comprehended. In the Commandment which forbids the horrible outrage of “ murder,” we are required, in general, not to injure our neighbour in his *person* : in that which stigmatizes the crime of “ adultery,” we are forbid, in general, to wound our neighbour in his *affections* and



domestic happiness : when we are commanded not to “steal,” we are required not to injure him in his *property* : and when we are forbid to “bear false witness against our neighbour,” we are likewise forbid to do him any injury in his *character*. Under these heads, probably, may be brought every kind of injury which can be committed ; and we here have an occasion to admire the complete and comprehensive nature of these familiar rules of duty.

There is a question, my brethren, which we are often disposed to ask, especially when we witness any of the more flagrant violations of the laws of justice and humanity :—What in nature can so far overcome all the best feelings of the human heart, as to make men run into the commission of enormities which are even horrible to name ? In the last Commandment, this question is answered—the

source of human wickedness is pointed out—and we are sent into our own bosoms, and there required to check the evil in its rise. Before we can be unjust in action we must be so in desire; we must have injured our neighbour in our hearts; and if we strive not to cleanse our imaginations from irregular desires, there is no degree of wickedness into which we may not possibly be betrayed. “Thou shalt not covet,” is a rule, therefore, of the utmost wisdom, and would, if it were observed, infallibly free the world from that guilt with which it is stained.

How beneficent are the arrangements of Nature, if man would but act in subservience to them! How kind is she to all her children, and how abundant the enjoyments which each by his own exertions might acquire, without interfering with those of others! It is in overlooking the provision which she makes for

the happiness of all, that we are tempted to gratify our wishes by irregular means, and to aim at seizing upon that forbidden fruit, which inevitably ruins us when we taste it !

Such, my brethren, is a short view of the truths contained in the Second Table of the law. Our Saviour has comprehended them all under the words of the text, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” To this issue, indeed, all the laws of social duty point, and from this principle they are best derived. We shall not injure those whom we love,—and it is not sufficient to refrain from injury, but it is likewise incumbent on us to do good. In this rule, therefore, the precepts of morality begin and terminate. It affords us the strongest motive to their fulfilment, and points out their measure and extent. It is evidently, too, the source of the purest Happiness, as well as of the most perfect

Virtue ; for there is no happiness that deserves the name, unconnected with our social affections.

“ The second,” we are told, “ is like “ unto the first ;” and both together open an aspect of the system of the Universe, not more sublime than it is delightful. At the head of this system, we behold ONE who diffuses happiness throughout the whole, and who seeks the love of his creatures, only that they may become still more happy. To Him their affections are in the first instance guided, and then they are told, that, if they love Him, they must also love one another. Each individual is taught, that he must live not to himself alone, but to God and to his fellow-creatures, and that when he is thus actuated, he will then likewise live best to himself. The system of God, therefore, is the system of universal happiness: the false systems of men produce all the misery of their being.

Wherever private affections gain the mastery, there violations of justice open the bitterest springs of human wretchedness. Man then becomes the enemy of man. Love is banished from his breast, and all the dark and malignant passions occupy its room.

Before you, my young friends, this scene is opened. Two ways are pointed out to you ; the one, which leads into the course appointed by Heaven, and which, under the favour of God, and amidst the gratitude of man, will conduct you to "life, and honour, and immortality." The other path is that which your own passions will recommend—the path of private gratification, of selfish interest, of unconcern for the good of mankind. Every thing that is great and generous in your nature calls you into the first of these ways ; and be assured, if you persevere in it, your ultimate reward will be



great beyond every thing that it has entered into your hearts to conceive. To the other you are drawn by all the low and little affections, by worldly views, and temporary interests ; when you yield to these, your minds at present will be debased and degraded, and they will lose all the aspiring hopes which point to futurity.

It is our earnest prayer, my brethren, when we look upon the young, that they may be enabled to keep the right road, and to avoid every path that is destructive ! When we look back upon our own conduct, we shall too often find, that we have ourselves followed the road which ought to have been avoided. In the mean time, life is advancing, years are casting their shade over us, and we are going forward to that final country from which there is no return. How important, then, that we should pause in our journey, and

meditate, with serious resolution, on the course which is yet before us ! Whatever laws we have infringed, it is yet in our power to make reparation ; whatever duties we have neglected to perform, in these we may yet bestir ourselves with more strenuous exertion.

If it is possible that any meditations can awaken such resolutions of amendment, those in which we have, of late, been engaged, and which we are now entering upon with still more profound feeling, will surely not be in vain. The day is approaching when we shall contemplate the death of the Son of God, and shall behold that love which binds, in one connected chain, all the universe of goodness and innocence, making one mighty effort to restore whatever is corrupted and fallen ! If so great an effort has been made, shall not we exert ourselves along with it ; and shall all the

pains of the Cross, and all the triumphs of the Resurrection, be to us of no avail?

Go, my brethren, to the altar of your Saviour, and ask the assistance of his Spirit, to strengthen you in your labours of duty: go to him, with sincere hearts, and he will be found of you: he will lift your souls above this narrow and empty scene, and lead you to his Father, whom he requires you to “love with all your hearts, “and with all your souls, and with all “your minds:” and to your and his brethren of mankind, whom He alone can teach you “to love as yourselves!”

## DISCOURSE XIV.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE YOUNG. \*

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HEBREWS, vi. 12.

*“ Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying  
“ on of hands.”*

THERE cannot, my brethren, be a more interesting rite, than that by which the infant is at first initiated into the Church of Christ. It is of the simplest kind in itself, but it signifies privileges of the most important nature ; and we cannot too often call to mind the benefits which are

\* Preached on the Sunday before Easter, and after a General Confirmation.

thus conferred on us. If we are born by nature into a world where we shall certainly be assailed by corruption and impurity, the rite of Baptism implies, that we are likewise born into a greater world of purity and holiness, and that the shedding abroad of the Spirit of God will finally remove every stain from our souls, even as the body is cleansed by the washing of water.

The rite is rendered still more interesting by the period of life at which it is performed. It is pleasing to think that we have scarcely entered upon existence, when we are met by the Gospel of our Lord,—that now, also, as of old, he takes the little children in his arms and blesses them,—and that the Spirit of the Most High “descends as a dove” upon the bosom of infant innocence. They who would defer this rite to an after age, rob it of much of its interest and beauty ;



and it is not, I believe, going too far to say, that those aspects of Christianity, which are the most affecting to our hearts, will, in general, be found likewise to be the truest and the best.

The privileges of baptism are not, however, bestowed without promises on our parts. The Spirit of God will not dwell with those who do not endeavour to become temples meet for his presence ; and when he deigns to descend to purify the human heart, man is required to promise that he will exert himself to be holy and pure. These promises are made for us at baptism by our sureties, and it is the part of those to whose care the infant mind is entrusted, to see that those promises are fulfilled, in as far as depends on them, by every wise means of Christian instruction, and by cultivating all the best principles of virtue and true holiness.

There is, however, a very interesting period of life, when the young may become fully aware of their own moral and religious obligations ; and when they are called upon to profess before the Church of Christ, their own determination to become his faithful servants. On this solemn occasion, the privileges of their baptism are confirmed to them by “ the laying on of the hands ” of God’s ministers ; a rite derived from the earliest ages of Christianity ; and significant of that fatherly hand, under whose care they profess to live, and by whose guidance they are now willing to be led.

We have lately returned, my brethren, from witnessing this holy and affecting rite ; and we are now assembled with several of the young of our congregation, to whom it was administered, in grateful meditation on the prospects which were then opened to them ; and in the pleasing hope that they will “ lead the rest of

“ their lives according to this beginning.”

It was not, I trust, without thought and consideration, that they advanced to this sacred service ; and that the resolutions which they then formed, will appear in their conduct by all the best fruits of virtue and piety. It is fitting, however, that they should not immediately lose sight of the religious duty in which they have been engaged, or of the impressions which it was designed to leave upon their hearts ; and it may not, perhaps, be an useless attempt, if I endeavour, with all the simplicity in my power, to lay before them some views of faith and of conduct, which may not be inapplicable to their present reflections, and to the character of their years.

In the first place, then, the young are now called upon to cultivate the dispositions of piety, with a more fixed and steady application of mind than they may hitherto have bestowed upon them.

There are various prejudices of the world which find their way even into the youngest minds, in consequence of which this part of duty is apt to seem distasteful to them, and perhaps gloomy. The minds of the young, we know, are alive to every present impression of gaiety and vivacity; the pleasures which are scattered around them, or the incitements of a romantic imagination, fill all their thoughts, and seem alone adapted to their years; and when they are called to more serious contemplations, they appear, perhaps, to be carried out of the natural sphere of their existence. It would be cruel, no less than unwise, to throw any chill upon the spring and the ardour of youth, to entangle the easy flow of its thoughts in the net of inexplicable mystery, or to darken its hopes and its prospects by images of supernatural terror. Youth is happy by nature, and true Re-



ligion calls upon it to rejoice;—it only wishes to render its rejoicing permanent, and to fix its happiness for ever. It seeks to add a new zest to enjoyment, by uniting it to gratitude,—by raising the youthful mind to the source from which all its happiness flows,—to that unchanging goodness in which it “lives, and “moves, and has its being,”—to that gracious Father, from whom life itself, and all the capacities of joy, are derived, and who looks down with paternal delight on the genuine happiness of all his children.

Is it unsuitable, let me ask, to the glowing affections of Youth, to raise its thoughts, at times, to this high contemplation? To look abroad upon universal existence, and to behold all creation rejoicing in the bounty of its God? To view Material Nature clothed in every form of beauty, and animated Being enjoying every variety of happiness? To feel, amid the



mighty scene, that itself is not forgotten,—that its own light spirits, and active limbs, and ardent hopes, are gifts from the same bounteous hand,—and to suffer the flame of love and of gratitude to kindle amidst the glow of youthful joy? Is there any severity, then, in the demand, that the young should “remember their Creator in the days of their youth?” And does the world give them a more generous lesson,—one better adapted to the warm impulses of their hearts,—when it would confine their thoughts to the mere selfishness of enjoyment,—when it would draw them, by degrees, into the gross circle of sensuality,—and close their eyes for ever to all that Divine splendour of beneficence which surrounds them,—and check every emotion of gratitude that throbs within?

From the cultivation of piety, my young friends, you are, in the second

place, naturally led to that of every other duty ; and surely the demand which is now made upon you, “ if there be any virtue, “ and if there be any praise,” to think of these things, is neither unfitting the character of your reflections, nor the generous sentiments of your years. Even at your years you must have perceived, that life, with all its capacities of enjoyment, is not designed to be a dream of pleasure,—that something is to be done in existence, no less than to be enjoyed,—and that the heart of man can less endure the sense of degradation and contempt, than all the sufferings and sorrows of his uncertain and perishable being. While, then, you are called by Religion as well as by Nature, to “ rejoice “ in your youth,”—remember that you are likewise called upon to act a part on the theatre of human life ; and if you will listen to the voice of your own hearts,

you will hear it assure you, that more happiness must accrue to you from acting that part well, than from all the intoxication of pleasure, or all the splendours of fortune. You will hear it assure you, that the true honours of your nature have, in every age, been won by resolution and self-command; and the examples in history, to which your eye involuntarily turns, and which rouse every sympathetic emotion of your uncorrupted minds, are those of the hero, the patriot, or the sage,—not the degraded minions of pomp, or pleasure, or power.

To such examples, even human wisdom, amid all its imperfection, invariably directs you; but you are now led, by a wisdom greater than that of man, to the contemplation of a still higher morality, and a more perfect example. You are called by the holy voice of the Son of God himself, to the cultivation of every

pure, and gentle, and elevated principle of conduct ; you hear him entreat you, not as a Master, but as a Friend, to take his “ easy yoke upon you, and his “ light burden,” and you see Him walking before you in every path of duty, wherever man is to be blessed, or God is to be honoured. At your age, the duties required of you are not, in general, hard to be exercised ; you are rather preparing for the business of life, than have actually entered upon it. You are not yet assailed by violent temptations, nor have to struggle against habits long confirmed ;—yet you have knowledge and wisdom to acquire, passions to regulate, innocence to guard, virtue to improve, and on the success of your present exertions depends, more than you can now conceive, the future honour and happiness of your being. “ Whatsoever “ things, therefore, are true, whatsoever



“ things are honest, whatsoever things  
 “ are just, whatsoever things are pure,  
 “ whatsoever things are lovely, whatso-  
 “ ever things are of good report ; if there  
 “ be any virtue, and if there be any  
 “ praise, think on these things ;—those  
 “ things which ye have both learn-  
 “ ed, and received, and heard, and seen,  
 “ do, and the God of Peace shall be with  
 “ you !”

There is, in the third place, another  
 view of human life, of which even the  
 youngest among us cannot be ignorant—  
 that man is subject to suffering of differ-  
 ent kinds, both such as arises from his  
 own misconduct, and such as belongs  
 to his frail and precarious existence. I  
 will not suppose, that you, my young  
 friends, are acquainted with vice in any  
 of its more disgraceful forms—yet you  
 have “ done those things which you  
 “ ought not to have done, and left un-  
 “ done those things which you ought to



“ have done.” There is a feeling of helplessness and despondency naturally accompanying the reproaches of conscience, and although it may make but a transient impression on the careless spirits of youth, it is a feeling which all must, in some degree, have experienced. Nothing more enfeebles the mind for any good or virtuous exertion ; and it is thus that vice produces vice, by making the attainment of virtue despaired of, and, by drawing around the soul that circle of enchantment, from which it cannot discover the means of emancipation.

It is the glory of that Religion, of which you have now professed yourselves the disciples, that it has burst these unworthy fetters of the soul. He who came to guide you to duty, came likewise to save you from sin ; and if you feel that you have offended, and long to regain that path which you have left, you are called by the voice of Heaven

itself, to throw away every desponding apprehension, “to arise at once, and go “to your Father;”—and the blood which was shed upon the Cross, is the pledge that your Father is ever ready to receive, and that the Spirit of consolation and of strength is ever willing to conduct you!

But is it the evils of life that appal you, and are even your young spirits no strangers to affliction? Then look to the Master whom you have vowed to serve! In Him, behold “a man of sorrows, and “acquainted with grief,” and hear him say to all his sorrowing disciples,—“Come “unto me all ye that are weary and heavy “laden, and I will give you rest.”—Is it the close of mortal existence which you contemplate with horror? Have the parents whom you revered, or some youthful companion, dropped from before your eyes into the grave? And is the natural gaiety of your hearts clouded by the gloom

of “ the shadow of death ? ” Come, then, with thankfulness, my young friends, and fix your eyes upon the glorious discoveries which have now been unveiled to you. Behold in the Conqueror of Sin, the Conqueror likewise of Death ! See his Divine form bursting from the tomb, in all the radiance of a celestial nature, and listen to these words of exulting Faith, “ O Death, where is thy sting ? O Grave, where is thy victory ? ”

Such is the Religion which you have now acknowledged to be yours ; and I trust in God, that no perversion of heart, and no imagination of vanity, will ever tempt you to desert it. Yet you *may* probably hear voices that will endeavour to win you to other impressions of opinion and of conduct ; and in the seductions of present pleasure, to drown all your high views of duty, and all your glorious prospects of futurity.

Come, then, while your hearts are yet warm with the sentiments of your late professions and engagements; come, and assemble round the altar of Him, in whose name the waters of baptism were at first poured upon your heads;—of Him who has now, in your riper years, “shewn you the Father,” and called you, amidst the happiness of opening existence, to acknowledge the God of love and of every true joy;—of Him, who walks before you in the road of duty, and reclaims you from all the wanderings of sin, and, amidst the gathering evils of life, sheds abroad upon your hearts the consolations of his Spirit, and cheers even “the valley of the shadow of death,” by the day-spring of immortality from on high!—Come and repeat your vow, to “continue his faithful servants for ever;” and be well assured, whatever may be the colour of your future days, whether they

lead you through joy or sorrow, that if you do not forsake him, He will never abandon you !



## DISCOURSE XV.

ON RELIGIOUS TRUST. \*

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MARK, iv. 40.

*“And he said unto them, Why are ye so  
“fearful? How is it that ye have no  
“faith?”*

IN my two last discourses from the Gospel of St Mark,† I endeavoured to illustrate the manner in which our Lord was in use to deliver his instructions. I am now led to observe, that instruction is occasionally conveyed in several of the in-

\* Preached on Easter Sunday.

† See Discourses VIII. and IX.

cidents which befell him, to a much greater extent than appears at first from the simple narrative ; and that many of his observations, which seem only to refer to the particular circumstances in which He or his disciples happened to be placed, may be applied to various other situations in human life.

This remark cannot be better illustrated than by the striking incident to which we are now come in the course of our inquiries, and which is related by the Evangelist in the following words : “ The  
“ same day, when the even was come, he  
“ saith unto them, Let us pass over unto  
“ the other side. And there arose a great  
“ storm of wind, and the waves beat into  
“ the ship, so that it was now full. And  
“ he was in the hinder part of the ship,  
“ asleep on a pillow ; and they awake  
“ him, and say unto him, Master, carest  
“ thou not that we perish ? And he arose,  
“ and rebuked the wind, and said unto

“ the sea, Peace, be still ; and the wind  
“ ceased, and there was a great calm.  
“ And he said unto them, Why are ye so  
“ fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?  
“ And they feared exceedingly, and said  
“ one to another, What manner of man is  
“ this, that even the wind and the sea  
“ obey him ?”

I know not, my brethren, that I can better employ your time at present than in drawing from this interesting occurrence those religious reflections to which it so naturally gives rise, and which will be found, in some respects, applicable to those great solemnities in which we have just been engaged.

There cannot be a doubt, then, that much of the unhappiness of mankind is to be ascribed to their want of faith in the protection of Heaven ; and that, in their voyage through the stormy waves of the world, they would enjoy infinitely

greater tranquillity, if they kept their eyes steadily fixed upon that Almighty Protector, who may seem, perhaps, to sleep in the midst of their perplexities and dangers, but whose watchful care is ever at hand, and who, with one word, can rebuke the winds and the sea, and restore the calm. Wherever we look around us, we see men miserable from the cares and afflictions of life ; and it is impossible, certainly, to pass through this scene of mutability and of trial, without feeling, and often feeling deeply, the distresses to which our nature is exposed. When the affluent are reduced to poverty,—when some dear tie of social or domestic life is broken,—when, looking beyond private afflictions, we contemplate the wide-spread calamities of nations,—in all these circumstances, we, no doubt, see enough to call forth tears and sorrow ; and it would be unnatural to meet them with

insensibility. It is not because they feel the evils of their condition, that men are to be reproved, but because they despond under them, and thus add immeasurably to their weight. It is because they are guilty of that irreligious despondency, which refuses to acknowledge the protecting hand of Providence ; and when the tempest is abroad, and the ship is covered with the waves, trembles lest the Ruler of the Universe is asleep.

In every situation of human misery, this species of despondency is particularly to be avoided ; and that its groundlessness and unworthiness may appear, it may perhaps be useful to examine, somewhat more minutely, those different instances of affliction at which I have hinted.

I. There is not, perhaps, an affliction which, at first sight, appears more grievous than the fall from affluence to po-



verty ; and, as is often the case in the storms of commercial adventure, there is none which may occur more suddenly, or which strikes a greater horror into the surrounding spectators. It is grievous, no doubt, for him who has long enjoyed the luxuries of life, to accommodate himself to its wants and its hardships : it is more grievous to bring down that pride of the heart, which has loved distinction, and which cannot bear to lose it : it is more afflicting still, to a good mind, to see the objects of its dearest affections and hopes foregoing all their fairest prospects in society, and, instead of that independence which seemed to be their lot, encountering the labours of a lower station.

There is no one possessed of the feelings of a man, who will not sympathize deeply with those who are subjected to such sufferings ; but it is not suffering only that we see upon these occasions—

it is not uncommonly despair. Under the heavy blow of adversity, the heart too often closes even to those feelings which bind it to existence; and it is against this darkness of the soul, which is frequently followed by such melancholy results, that Religion raises her voice, and cries aloud to those who are trembling amidst the storms of Fortune, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” Suffer for a moment the waves of fate to dash over you,—yet fear not that your happiness will be wrecked for ever. There is One watching over it, and sitting near you, who, if you will await his rising, will rebuke the winds and the sea, and restore a calm greater than that which you have lost; not, perhaps, the deceitful calm of prosperity, but the enduring calm of a virtuous and religious mind. From the bosom of your gathering misfortunes will spring virtues which you have never

known ; and, instead of fortune, you will leave to your children the example of wisdom, moderation, and piety.

It is not, indeed, too much to say, my brethren, that the hour in which the rich man has fallen into poverty, he has often had afterwards occasion to consider as the hour which brought him his greatest blessings,—as the hour which has made him acquainted with himself, and with what is truly valuable in human existence,—as the hour which, in the rough but salutary school of adversity, has given to himself and to his family that serious cast of thought, and that manly firmness of character, which would otherwise, perhaps, have been utterly destroyed and dissipated amidst the follies and the littleness of the world !

II. There are, however, evils of another description, from which even the most

prosperous are not exempt, and which often, indeed, seem to fix their sting, with more than common malignity, in the breasts of those upon whom the sunshine of Fortune smiles. There are minds, too, firm against all the attacks of adversity, which yet sink under every wound given to their hearts, and which, when Death unlooses the bonds of love that are wound around them, seem to themselves to be cut off from all the props of their being. There is a principle of affection and of sensibility in such characters, which is, no doubt, highly interesting ; but when they obstinately persist in thinking, that with the ties of mortal connection all their happiness is dissolved for ever, it is time for the voice of Religion to be heard, “ Why are ye so fearful ? How is it that “ ye have no faith ? ” Who was it that knit these bonds of love, on which the blessing of your existence has hitherto



hung? Was it the disposition of some happy accident?—O no! These holy ties were bound by One who rides securely through the storm, that has rent and shattered them. The sails that bore you smoothly along over the sea of life, may now be the sport of the winds, or may be buried in the waves: but can you abandon yourselves to despair, when you look on the serene countenance of Him who reposes near you, and who will soon arise and infuse into your hearts the calm of his benevolent Spirit? Thus it is, when death deprives us of those whom we love, that we are called upon by Religion to rely, with affectionate confidence, upon the great Being who bestowed on us at first these our choicest blessings, and who, when he thinks fit to remove them, is still the same God “whose mercy endureth for ever.” Whatever object of our affections he recalls from us, he himself



is never removed, and we then, perhaps, learn best to cling to Him, when all our mortal hopes are perishing around us !

III. There are, in the third place, public afflictions ; and there are occasions when we tremble amidst the storms of our country, and of the world. Here, too, the call of Religion meets us, and when, in the perplexity of our souls, we say, “ Master, carest thou not that we “ perish ? ” we hear the words of reproof, “ Why are ye so fearful ? How is it that “ ye have no faith ? ” The fortunes of nations, we are instructed, do not ultimately depend on the short-sighted designs of human policy. They who seem most active in guiding the ship, and who fancy that they only can save it from the storm, have perhaps the least real influence on its direction—and the great Governor of the world, whom they may imagine to

be slumbering amidst their exertions, may silently be preparing the calm in which his people shall repose. When, then, the world is laid waste by the waves of ambition,—or when internal factions are impeding the progress of the ship in which we are embarked, while we perform with zeal the duties allotted to us as Citizens and as Christians,—let us trust the event to Him who can rebuke the winds and the sea,—who “can still the noise of its waves, and the tumult of the people.”

IV. There is, in the fourth place, one general calamity to which all men are subjected, and which occasions, at some time or other, fears in every breast. We are well aware that the voyage in which we are engaged must come to a close, but we are greatly ignorant of the period of its termination, and cannot but look forward,

with anxiety, to the destiny which then awaits us. We, indeed, contrive, for the most part, to occupy our thoughts with the passing circumstances and adventures of our course; and, while the sea is smooth, and the sun is gilding it with its rays, and we pass near delightful shores, to which the gales of hope are ever wafting us, we can frequently drown, in a pleasing oblivion, all thought of that dark and unknown region. But when a storm begins to arise, then we tremble, and look with anxious alarm on the impending danger. We then see the gulf opening to receive us, and cry, in the agony of our souls, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" It is then, my brethren, that the voice of Religion speaks to us in the language of mingled reproof and assurance. Here again it says, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" It shews us One who conde-

scended to accompany our voyage through the sea of mortality,—who, along with us, seemed to be sinking in the ship,—but who, in the awful hour when the waves were covering us,—and when even he, for a time, slept the slumber of the dead, rose, as on this day, triumphant and serene amidst the wreck of nature, and rebuked the winds and the seas, and breathed around him the calm of immortal hope!—This calm may now for ever be our portion, if we will remain his faithful disciples. The true shore to which our voyage tends will brighten as we approach to it. The Sun of Righteousness will shine over us, and the shadow of death itself will not be able to quench his rays!

V. But, have we wandered far from that course of our lasting peace? Has the storm surprised us amidst our wan-



derings? And, are we fearful lest we perish before the friendly voice can be heard, which alone can restore the stillness of conscience?—This is, indeed, the most intolerable evil to which man is subject,—the consciousness of guilt, and the consequent gloom which is thereby thrown on all his prospects of futurity! With what eagerness men have at all times sought a cure for this wound of the spirit, is evident from the practice of sacrifice, so prevalent in the ancient world, when the poor sinner was glad to have recourse to the “blood of bulls and of goats,” in the fond imagination that “it could take away sins.” Yet, in the lowest condition of the human understanding, it was impossible that the mind could repose, with any satisfaction, in the belief, “that in such sacrifices God would “have pleasure;” and, while the melancholy attempt to appease the wrath of



Heaven was constantly repeated, it was as constantly found to be vain. In this cheerless state of Religion, in this wreck of conscience and of man,—when the voice of despair was feebly uttering the words, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?”—In that awful moment, the Saviour of the world said, “It is finished, and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” The mighty expiation was now for ever accomplished; and he arose from the sleep of death, and rebuked the storms of a guilty world, and said, “Peace, be still;—and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm!” From the period of those great events, which the solemnities of the altar have brought so clearly before us, Religion has been freed of every thing that was dark and unsatisfactory,—the veil of the temple has been rent in twain,—and sinful man may now approach, by “a new

“and living way,” to contemplate the beauty of the mercy of God!

“Are ye then desirous, my brethren, to forsake your sins, to regain the favour of your Maker, and to be now, at length, numbered among his children? Have ye prayed to Him in secret to restore you, and do you resolve from henceforth to go on in the strength of his Spirit? Have you prostrated yourselves, this day, at the foot of the Cross? Then, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” “Who is he that condemneth?” “It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Contemplate his sufferings for you, and doubt of forgiveness if you can!—Weep, but let your tears be tears of joy:—“Go and sin no more!”

That we may ever be prepared against our future dangers, it is wise

in us to seek, at times, the peaceful shelter of the altar. There, I trust, we have now refitted ourselves from the storm, and have become strengthened for the course that is yet before us. There, too, I trust, we have felt the power of Him who conducts us through the deep; and, instead of continuing fearful and without faith, have been encouraged to fall down before him, and to exclaim, in all the fervour of devotion, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind  
"and the sea obey him?"

## DISCOURSE XVI.

ON CHRISTIAN FAITH.\*

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MARK, v. 36.

*“ As soon as Jesus heard the word that was  
“ spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the  
“ synagogue, Be not afraid, only be-  
“ lieve.”*

IN the chapter, my brethren, to which I have now come, in the course of my reflections on the Gospel of St Mark, there are three very remarkable miracles of our Lord narrated. In the first of these,

\* Preached on Trinity Sunday.

that of casting out the legion of Devils from the maniac whom he met among the tombs, the authority of Jesus over impure spirits, and over the agitations of the human mind, is strikingly displayed. In the second, the cure of the woman, whose timid modesty prevented her from declaring her malady to him, but whose strong faith looked for remedy, if she might touch but his garment,—we see exemplified both his power over the diseases of the human body, and the value which he put upon that principle of Faith, so often the subject of his commendation. In the third miracle, that of raising the daughter of Jairus, we perceive that he is the Lord of life and of death,—and we hear him, in the text, calling on those who are alarmed with the appearances of the close of mortal existence, not to be afraid, but to believe in him ! In all these incidents there is much room for reflection. I



shall take notice of a few particulars in each of them ; but my chief object shall be, to explain the nature of that Faith, which it is the design of them all to recommend.

In the first of these incidents, there are several difficulties. It is one of the strongest instances recorded in the Gospels, of the singular power which Evil Spirits, at that time, possessed over the minds of men. In several of the accounts given us of our Lord's casting out devils, we might suppose that this was merely a metaphorical expression for the cure of insanity : but here we find that he actually converses with these Evil Spirits, and that he permits them to take refuge in a herd of swine. There does then seem to have been a real influence permitted in those ages, to these wicked beings, over the minds of some individuals. To all outward appearance,

however, this influence seemed, as I have before remarked, to bear the closest resemblance to insanity ; and there never, I believe, was a more affecting picture of that horrible malady than that which is here given us. “ When he was come  
“ out of the ship, immediately there met  
“ him, out of the tombs, a man with an  
“ unclean spirit, who had his dwelling  
“ among the tombs, and no man could  
“ bind him ; no, not with chains : because  
“ that he had been often bound with fet-  
“ ters and chains ; and the chains had  
“ been plucked asunder by him, and the  
“ fetters broken in pieces ; neither could  
“ any man tame him. And always,  
“ night and day, he was in the mountains  
“ and in the tombs, crying and cutting  
“ himself with stones.”—This wretched man seems to have felt, however indistinctly, that Jesus could bring him relief : so that when he saw him afar off, he ran

and worshipped him ;—at the same time crying, in his frenzy, “ What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God ? I adjure thee, by God, that thou torment me not.”

Our Saviour immediately cast out the devils ; and the next difficulty which occurs, respects the permission which he gave them to enter into the herd of swine, which was feeding there “ nigh unto the mountains ;” when immediately “ the herd ran violently down a steep place, and were choked in the sea.”—It has been well observed respecting this singular circumstance, that, as it was contrary to the law of the Jews to have such animals in their possession, so this permission of our Saviour was a proper method of punishing the proprietors of the herd, for their disobedience to the Divine institutions of their country. There seems, likewise, to be a moral instruction shadowed out

in this incident,—and the manner in which the herd of swine, when they were possessed by the unclean spirits, “ran violently down a steep place into the sea,” may present us with a lively picture of the effects of sensual habits, by which men are first reduced to the most brutal condition, and are afterwards hurried violently to their destruction.

Upon being restored to his right mind, the man who had been possessed, naturally felt the utmost gratitude towards his benefactor, and prayed him, we are told, that he might be permitted to become one of his followers. “Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” These words convey to us much instruction, and carry evident proofs of the composure and reasonable-



ness of sound religion. It is not at all uncommon for men, particularly of susceptible imaginations, whenever they have acquired any strong impressions, of the truth and the importance of Christianity, immediately to suppose, that it is their duty to give up all their customary connections and occupations in society, and to take upon themselves some spiritual mission for the general good of the human race. This is thought by many to be the truest sign of a strong and lively faith, and they will scarcely admit any to be really Christians who do not, at the same time, attempt to become Apostles.

In the passage before us, our Saviour seems to give a very instructive admonition to persons of this character. In the warmth of his gratitude, the poor man who had been possessed was desirous to quit all his original pursuits, and



to dedicate himself solely to the ministry of Christ ; but his gracious Master saw probably that a person whose mind had suffered so severe a shock, was not the fittest instrument that could be chosen for a service, which, while it required men to be, "harmless as doves," required them likewise to be "wise as serpents:" at all events, he saw that this individual would both be happier in the quiet of domestic society, and might likewise be much more useful, while to those who could sympathize with all his feelings, and had suffered so much from the spectacle of his calamity, he would often relate, with tears of grateful Faith, "how great things the Lord had done for him," and what compassion he had on him.

It is by a departure from this simple line of conduct that many men of sensibility and of warm imaginations, who receive, perhaps, sudden impulses respecting Di-

vine truth, so often run into enthusiastic delusions, and apparently do all they can to render themselves and their religion objects of ridicule to the world. They are too apt to conceive, that their sudden convictions are of a miraculous nature, and contain a call to them to forsake all and to follow Christ. They thus set out upon extravagant schemes, to which the situation of society is not adapted ; they degrade religion by mistaking their own low and grovelling conceptions for the inspirations of Heaven ; and, in the meantime, they give up all the mighty opportunities of doing good, which they might have pursued in a quiet and gentle course, by insinuating into the hearts of those with whom they are connected, throughout the silent progress of a good life, a sense of “ the great things which the Lord “ had done for them, and of the compassion which he had on them.” The

true spirit of Christian faith is often, indeed, much better shewn, by retiring from public view, and giving ourselves up to the concerns of the little sphere in which we naturally live, than in attempts to instruct whole communities of men, with whom we have scarcely any bond of union, and who are, probably, very indifferent both to us and to our doctrines. In the next incident, we have a picture of faith, of a still more private and less communicative kind. It is that of the diseased woman, who, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind and touched his garment; for she said, "If I may but touch his clothes I shall be whole." It seemed to be the wish of this woman that her disease and her cure should be equally unknown; and, assured as she was of the power of Him whom she approached, and grateful as she must have been for the remedy

which she experienced, yet she would, probably, had she not been drawn forth from her concealment, have kept the whole transaction to herself, and might, to all outward appearance, have remained little distinguished from the multitude around her. Although such might be her views, her Lord was yet pleased with her secret faith, “and he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.”

Far be it from me, my brethren, to insinuate that a Christian is not under an obligation to make his “light shine before men.” Yet it is rather by the “good works” of the Gospel, than by a display of his inward experiences and illuminations, that he is directed so to let his light shine; and there are, I believe, many simple Christian characters, who, applying their



faith solely, like the excellent woman here presented to us, to the cure of their own secret infirmities, look with the most perfect indulgence upon the rest of the world, and never conceive that they are called upon to set on foot any work of reformation, except what may be effected by the silent influences of a virtuous and holy example.

Such are some views afforded us by these incidents, of a kind somewhat different from those which are very commonly entertained. They lead, at least, to this general conclusion, which cannot well be disputed, that, whatever may be the Christian duty of some individuals, whose opportunities lead them into plans of extensive good, the duty, in the first place, of all, is to apply their principles of amelioration carefully to their own hearts ;—to take “the beam out of their own eyes” before they pretend to “cast out the



“ mote from the eye of their brother ;”—and rather to do a little effectually than to attempt a great deal which they may be incapable of performing.

It is this great consideration, or the efficacy of Faith in removing our own private infirmities, which we see pourtrayed in the incidents before us, and, indeed, in all the accounts of our Saviour’s miracles. These were performed, it is true, upon the bodies of men, but they are intended to represent the still more important cures which are at all times performed upon the human soul by the influence of his Spirit, and the healing virtues of his Blood.

The principle of faith, as applied to our spiritual condition, is then, as we are taught, in the first place, a strong conviction that there *is* a remedy provided for all the circumstances of human guilt,—and a determination to act upon that convic-

tion. In the unfortunate persons who came to our Lord for the cure of their bodily ailments, we find this firm conviction. Amidst all the horrors of their condition they did not despair. Even the wretched man whose mind was rendered the seat of so much frantic disorder, and who could not distinctly know his own situation, yet felt that there was a remedy even for his state, and “when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.” Without this conviction that there is a remedy for sin in the mercy of God, and that it has been revealed to man, the sinner naturally abandons himself to all the fatal consequences of his condition; he goes on in sin from not fixing his mind upon the means of restoration; and, while he is without confidence in the power of the Physician, it is impossible that his cure should be accomplished.

In these incidents we, in the second place, perceive to what this confidence amounts. It amounts to this, that for all the infirmities of nature, or of habit, there is a cure provided; not that, without being cured, we can be received as if we were whole. The common error on the subject of faith is, that, by an unaccountable dependence on the merits of our Saviour, we may receive pardon, although our moral dispositions remain unchanged; but we see, in the instances before us, that the only faith which he commended was that which, in a state of sickness, applied to him for *cure*, and which, therefore, could not be satisfied till a cure was accomplished. The true faith of the Gospel is not so much that sin will be pardoned, as that repentance will be accepted.

In the third place, from the events which we are considering, we see the

necessity of our own efforts, if we can ever hope that our faith should be effectual. In the case of bodily diseases, the unfortunate sufferers could indeed do little; but what they could do, they invariably did. They did not wait in a stupid self-delusion, vainly hoping that the Physician would come to them, or that his divine influences would light upon them without any exertion on their parts. The madman, "when he saw Jesus afar off, ran and worshipped him;" the woman "came in the press behind and touched his garment." In the case of moral diseases, where our own efforts can do much more, and where it would be absurd to expect any open and apparent miracle to be performed, nothing, therefore, can be more blind and extravagant, than to imagine that, without patient exertion on our parts, the Spirit of Grace will fall upon us, and restore the health of our souls.



I find, my brethren, that I should trespass too much upon your time, were I to extend these observations farther. The concluding incident of the chapter, from which my text is taken, brings before us, in the most beautiful manner, the second great subject on which the faith of the Christian is exercised,—the firm belief that the Master whom he serves is the Conqueror, not only of sin, but of death. The narration, however, requires no illustration; and I shall merely give it to you, in the words of the Evangelist,—“Behold there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name. And when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live. And as Jesus went with him, there came from his house



“ certain, which said, Thy daughter is  
“ dead ; why troublest thou the Master  
“ any farther ? As soon as Jesus heard  
“ the word that was spoken, he saith un-  
“ to the ruler of the synagogue, Be not  
“ afraid, only believe. And he cometh  
“ to the house and seeth the tumult, and  
“ them that wept and wailed greatly.  
“ And when he was come in, he saith  
“ unto them, Why make ye this ado  
“ and weep ? The damsel is not dead,  
“ but sleepeth. And they laughed him  
“ to scorn ; but, when he had put them all  
“ out, he taketh the father and the mo-  
“ ther of the damsel, and them that were  
“ with him, and entereth in where the  
“ damsel was lying. And he took the  
“ damsel by the hand, and said unto her,  
“ Damsel, I say unto thee arise. And  
“ straightway she arose.”

I shall now, my brethren, conclude, for  
this season, these very imperfect elucidations

tions of the Gospel of St Mark, having it in view again to recur to them, if I shall be permitted to see the commencement of another year; and I have only to express my hope, that, feeble as this attempt may have been, it may yet have had some tendency to recommend to your own private study and meditation, the invaluable contents of the Sacred Volume.

On the day which I have chosen for the conclusion of these inquiries, for the present,—the day on which our Church brings into view the sacred doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity,—it might be supposed that I should have spoken of Faith as it relates to mysteries in Religion. Scripture mysteries, however, appear chiefly to be so when they are treated of in the words of men,—as they are found, in the simplicity of the volume from which they are deduced, they in-

inspire merely sentiments of awe and veneration, without perplexing the understanding; and it is unwise to scrutinize them with the presumption which is frequently employed, whether it be for the purpose of weakening or supporting them. To the humble reader of Scripture, they will commonly present themselves in that form which is most beneficial to his soul;—and while he is there taught to adore the mercy of the Almighty Father, he will feel that he must look for it only through the mediation of the Son, and under the influences of the Holy Ghost!—To whom, in the unity of the Godhead, be ascribed all glory and praise, now, and ever!

## DISCOURSE XVII.

ON THE DISTINCTION OF RANKS IN SOCIETY.

ROMANS, xii. 4, 5.

*“ For, as we have many members in one  
“ body, and all members have not the  
“ same office; so we, being many, are one  
“ body in Christ, and every one members  
“ one of another.”*

THESE words contain a very beautiful view of the principles on which human society is founded, and lead to many important considerations on the duties of men to each other. On a cursory examination, there seems to be much irre-



gularity in the distribution of the gifts of Providence. Power, affluence, and abilities, are divided among men in very unequal portions; and while some are elevated, by these means, to a station which frequently does not appear to belong to them, others are as much lowered and depressed. These circumstances have afforded a constant ground of complaint; and, at first sight, there seems to be some difficulty in pointing out the justice of this arrangement. In the words of the Apostle, however, we shall find a clue to guide us; and it may be useful to follow out some reflections which naturally arise from them.

In the first place, notwithstanding the hardships and injustice which frequently are produced from the disparities in the condition of mankind, it may be remarked, that, unless there were these distinctions, society could never be formed into



one whole. If every man were complete in himself, no one would require the assistance of another, and, instead of that regular and compacted form, which, amidst all its disorders, the frame of human society exhibits, every one would exist in a state of disunion from his fellows, and a stop would be put to the whole progress and improvement of the world. The wants of some, and the superfluities of others, form the great link of union which binds men together;—the weak take shelter under the wing of the powerful, and the ignorant receive light and intelligence from the wise. It is thus that all become “members one of another,” and in this connection, there is actually much less preference shewn to any one class than may at first be imagined. The disorders inseparable from the present state of our nature will always, indeed, raise some men im-

measurably high, and depress others equally low ; but, taking the condition of mankind at an average, the distinctions which prevail are, as the Apostle terms them, differences of office or employment, much more than distinctions in point of advantage. It has often been remarked, that the lower orders of society enjoy a tranquillity and happiness to which those in the higher departments of life are very commonly strangers ; and when the poor and the humble industriously perform the duties of their station, it seldom happens that there is any condition above them which they can have much reason to envy.

These observations apply to human society, even as it appears before us, vitiated by guilt and folly, and in which, therefore, the true principles on which Providence designed it to be conducted, do not meet with their complete effect. Yet we may

discover what these principles are, if we consider, secondly, the natural *tendencies* of the distinctions among mankind, on the supposition, that they were not thwarted and led aside from their aim. And here, I believe, it will undeniably be found, that none of these distinctions are in themselves of a private or partial nature, but that they are all directed, with exquisite benevolence and wisdom, to the general good of the species. Men differ from each other, in power, in affluence, or in abilities. Yet none of these endowments can add very materially to the happiness of the person to whom they belong. Does the Prince sleep sounder than the Peasant? Does he whom fortune enables to accumulate around him all the luxuries and distinctions of life, really enjoy greater happiness than he who is blessed with competence and contentment? oesD

the Philosopher speculate, or the Warrior toil, or the Legislator plan, for his own private entertainment? And do not, on the contrary, all the powers which men exercise, and all the gifts of Heaven, look beyond the individual who possesses them, and evidently point to the surrounding multitude of the human race, who may derive from their right employment incalculable benefits?

In the very nature of these distinctions, therefore, we may clearly perceive the design of Providence in regard to them;—a design, indeed, which it is left for man to carry into effect, and which he too often neglects or misapprehends. It is too frequently our weakness to be delighted with the possession of an endowment, while we are inattentive to the uses for which it was bestowed;—a weakness to



which a large proportion of the crimes and miseries of mankind must be ascribed. From hence arise the restless schemes of ambition which overleap all the obstacles of justice and humanity ;—the luxuries, or the avarice of riches, which waste in sensuality or accumulation all the vast capacities of diffusing happiness with which Providence has endowed them ;—and the abuse of talents from the purposes of general good to the miserable gratification of private vanity. Such, indeed, are the perversions of man, which go far to obstruct the benevolent intentions of Heaven ; yet, if its Benevolence is obstructed, its Justice remains, and those who, for little private ends, refuse to become the ministers and stewards of its bounty, invariably accumulate upon their own heads deeper and more inward misery than, in the utmost malignity of



their selfishness, they are ever capable of inflicting upon others.

In the third place, my brethren, the text supplies us with a farther observation. It not only points out the principles which operate at present in equalizing the conditions of men, notwithstanding all the disorders and vices of society, and which would still farther produce an equality, if the natural tendencies of the distinctions among them were permitted to find their true scope, it farther reminds us, that there is a system already begun on earth, and which will ultimately be completed in heaven, in which all individual distinctions will infallibly combine in the final production of general good. This is the system of Christianity, by which "we being many, "are one body in Christ," and are obliged, by the faith which we profess, to be truly "members one of another." There

is no possible system which can produce so many moral inducements to the accomplishment of this great end here, or which can make clearer discoveries of its perfect accomplishment hereafter. Other systems of pretended benevolence have sought to equalize conditions by removing all distinctions, and the attempt has invariably given a shock to the whole fabric of society, and produced a tenfold accumulation of misery. Christianity seeks not to remove any one distinction, but has ever strengthened the bands of society, by pointing out to the different members of the human race the advantage which each will derive from the faithful discharge of its own office, and the happiness which will thence accrue to the general body.

The inducements, indeed, which this heavenly system employs are not those of force, but of persuasion; yet, in its

gentle course, it has done more to unite the discordant affections of men, and to produce an equal and impartial distribution of happiness, than in former periods the fondest hopes of the Philanthropist could ever have expected to be realized. Without endeavouring to inspire them with any disorderly presumption, but, on the contrary, inculcating all the principles of submission, it yet sets out with professing itself the Friend and the Guardian of the Poor, and at once crushes in the bud every prejudice of rank and fortune, which would regard, with the slightest emotion of disdain, that most important department of the human race. This vast object it attains, not merely by the force of reason, and by rousing every principle of latent generosity in the heart, but still more, by holding out to the eye of man the example of every virtue by which human

nature can be adorned, displayed, not in the stations of wealth or of power, but in the lowest condition of poverty and disgrace, and by teaching the rich and the powerful, that, in the once humble Individual who exhibited this example, all *their* hopes must now be centered, and that before Him every knee must learn to bow.

From the period at which men in all stations were taught to consider themselves as the servants of a Master who came with no appearances of worldly glory, the assertion of the Apostle must have, more or less, been obvious to every mind,—that the distinctions of human society are in fact merely differences of office,—and that no human being has the slightest reason, on account of the accidental station which he holds, to think meanly either of others or of himself. The higher orders have been taught,



that they must yet account for the use they have made of their advantages, to One who once occupied the rank of one of the lowest of mankind ; and the poor are taught not to be ashamed of their condition, nor to deem themselves trampled upon and despised, while they are merely passing through that condition of existence which the Son of God dignified and adorned. All are taught, that the only really important distinctions among men are those of virtue, and that every member of the Christian body, in its own station, may yet attain to the highest honours of its nature.

This is the farther system which Christianity assures us will hereafter be fully established in that higher kingdom, in which the distinctions will be those only of activity and fidelity, in which he who has well occupied his talents, however little they may have contributed to his



distinction here, will be proportionably rewarded, and from which those will be excluded who have neglected the employment of their earthly talent, however high the distinctions may have been, which it seemed to confer upon them. In that eternal Kingdom, the representation of the Apostle will at last be fully realized, when the society of "the just made perfect," will "be one body in Christ, and every one, indeed, members one of another."

The moral consequences of these reflections are sufficiently obvious. They, first of all, reconcile us to the frame of human society, which, amidst all its disorders, is yet founded on principles of impartiality and benevolence, that to a certain extent meet with their completion. They shew us farther, that the disorders of the present system of things are not to be remedied by violent means,

but that, under the direction of Providence, a divine remedy has already been applied, which accomplishes its end by the gentle methods of moral inducement. They point out, lastly, a higher system, in which all the disorders of time will be corrected, and in which the equal benevolence of Heaven will be displayed in all its glory!

Under the influence of these impressions and hopes, it is left for us to perform our different parts,—and I need not say with what activity, what fidelity, and what zeal, it becomes us to perform them! In every condition of life, offices are set before us, in the right discharge of which, not only our individual happiness, but the well-being of society, is involved. To all the endowments with which we may be distinguished, correspondent duties are clearly attached, and the more exalted our situation among men may be, the more

unwearied ought to be our activity, and the more extensive our beneficence ! In this connected system, no member can pretend that it is either insignificant or above being employed, and all are equally responsible for the manner in which their activity has been directed. I cannot, my brethren, strengthen the force of this representation,—and all I now add, is to pray God, that we may each in our several departments feel it as we ought !

## DISCOURSE XVIII.

### ON NATIONAL REFORMATION.\*

#### JEREMIAH, x. 24.

*“ O Lord, correct me, but with judgment ;  
“ not in thine anger, lest thou bring me  
“ to nothing.”*

WE ought not to suppose that adverse fortune, or circumstances of danger, are any indications of the forfeiture of the Divine favour, either with respect to individuals or to nations. On the contrary, it is evident that a tide of prosperity may

\* Preached at Leith, on June 7, 1804, being the day appointed by his Majesty for a General Fast.

be often the ruin of both ; and that the paternal care of Heaven cannot be more mercifully shewn in either case, than in applying those medicines and correctives which may restore the soundness of their moral constitution. The corrections of God, when applied to Nations, to which the solemnity of this day directs us to confine our attention, may be productive of the highest advantage in two views,—as they tend to produce Patriotism and Religion. To these considerations, I propose first to lead your thoughts, and shall then enter into such farther reflections as the occasion of our present meeting naturally suggests.

First, then, circumstances of distress and difficulty have a tendency to produce Patriotism in a nation. When everything prospers ; when councils at home and wars abroad are fully successful ; when Commerce pours in her trea-



sures, and men may enjoy their riches in repose, without the apprehension of foreign violence and rapine ;—when a nation is in this condition, how often does it happen, that the internal ties which unite it are on the point of being dissolved ; that individuals become occupied solely with the increase of their selfish gratifications ; and that the name of their Country becomes a vain and empty sound ! It is then that Governors too often pursue the dictates of private ambition, without regard to the happiness of the people, and that the People are apt to forget the principles of their allegiance and their duty, amid enterprises of licentiousness and delusion.

Now, in this situation, should circumstances of imminent peril arise, the necessity for cordial love and harmony, throughout the whole political system, will immediately be apparent. The Gover-

nors will feel, that, if they are the heads, the People are the hands. The people will become satisfied that counsel and prudence are necessary for their direction, and distrusting ignorant and factious leaders, they will look up with reverence to the constituted authorities of the state, and submit with confidence to the wisdom of their regulations. A general spirit of union will begin to prevail,—private interests will appear inconsiderable,—and every man will be animated with the desire of lending his share of assistance to the public cause. All will come to perceive what is the true nature of human society,—that distinctions must ever subsist,—but, that there is a common good in which the meanest individual participates, and which it is of infinitely greater moment for him to secure, than to attain the proudest pre-eminence of rank or fortune. The

civil rights to which he has been born,—the sacred charities of Home,—the innumerable ties and advantages of social life;—such are the stakes which every man has in the preservation of his country, but which few feel as they ought, till their country is in danger.

And in that sacred hour of peril, feelings, too, which, at other times, might appear romantic, acquire the steadiness and consistency of principle and truth, and animate the hearts of all with the determined purpose to give up everything that is dearest to them as men, for the preservation of their land and liberties. They then look with apprehension even on the tombs of their Fathers; they fear lest the dust of the Dead should be disturbed; and they even imagine that unconscious Nature itself demands protection from the spoiler. What, at other times, might pass for reason and Philosophy, is, on these occa-

sions, looked upon with disdain, and every generous breast burns with a zeal and fervour, which it feels to be virtue, without inquiring why it is so.

Such, then, is the fire of patriotism, which circumstances of imminent hazard kindle in the souls of a people who are not utterly lost to a sense of duty. I proceed, secondly, to shew that the Religion of a nation is greatly promoted and improved by the same means. Religion, it is to be feared, is not often hearty and sincere in individuals; it still less frequently forms the characteristic of a nation. The perversions of religion are indeed common. Some nations are superstitious,—others fanatical and enthusiastic, dividing themselves into sects about unimportant questions, and carrying all the pitiful rancour of human passions into the hallowed ground of Divine truth. But it is not often that we meet



with a sober and manly religion operating upon national morals, sanctifying all the virtues with the seal of Divine authority, bringing the Deity into the common intercourse of life, and making men sober, just, and merciful, not only because it is their interest here, but because it is the voice of God.

Success and prosperity are fatal corrupters of national piety. The higher ranks are then apt to become thoughtless and dissipated; and the lower too readily imitate the bad example. Sensual indulgence gradually diffuses itself from the top to the bottom of the society. This world, with its circle of gross enjoyments, clouds all their views and prospects, and the pure beams of Heaven find not their way through the smothering gloom. Different delusions pervade the different orders of men; and sometimes one delusion spreads over all.



Some sets of men begin to reason and speculate; and think themselves very wise when they have discovered, that nature may exist without an author,—that man is little better than a brute,—and that death is an eternal sleep. Others grow witty upon such subjects, and laugh every thing like seriousness and decency out of countenance. A creed so acceptable to the passions of men becomes fashionable,—is supported by the great, the learned, and the fair,—the poison steals from the palace of the nobleman into the cottage of the peasant,—and a general insensibility to the highest interests of man benumbs the devoted nation.

What now is to be done? Will the Great Governor of Nations destroy or reform? Will he “correct with judgment,” or “bring to nothing in his anger?” His long-suffering and loving-kindness, we

may humbly believe, will first incline him to the gentler method ; and reducing the people to some extremity which may terrify and alarm, he will make them feel that all the wealth on which they prided themselves, and which ministered to their corruption, may speedily vanish into other hands,—that their power is fleeting and unsubstantial,—that their armies and navies may avail them nothing,—and that their “ kingdom may be divided and “ given to the Medes and Persians.” Such an awful crisis will restore men’s minds, if they are not lost to all thought and reflection : the temples of God will again be frequented,—the admonitions from his holy Word will be listened to with reverence,—the plain unassuming wisdom of Religion will efface the wandering dreams of sophists and declaimers,—the nation will be delivered “ from the hand of strange “ children, whose mouth speaketh va-

“ nity, and their right hand is a right  
“ hand of falsehood ;” its “ sons will be as  
“ plants grown up in their youth, and its  
“ daughters as corner-stones, polished  
“ after the similitude of a palace.”

From these general reflections on the improvement which a nation may derive from the correcting hand of God, let us proceed to apply them to our own case,—to that visitation which we at present experience,—and consider in what manner we may profit by it,—and what hopes we can entertain of deliverance.—The situation itself is full of alarm. After many years of war, in which the nations of Europe have successively been baffled and defeated, we are again, after a short and fallacious peace, opposed to our proud enemies, headed by their greatest and most fortunate Commander. Having already spread devastation over the fairest regions of the earth, their hatred

and fury are now concentrated against us :  
—their numerous armies are drawn up  
against our shores ;—the instruments of  
invasion are prepared ;—and in their vain  
thoughts they have already divided the  
spoil !

Is this situation of peril without design ? No, my brethren ; it is the correction of God ; from which we *may* profit ; from which, I trust, we *have* profited. There was need of the correction. Even in this favoured land, the seat of rational and manly freedom, there were many wandering spirits, who, forgetful of the glory of their ancestors, and the inheritance to which they were born, looked with eager and admiring eyes to the extravagant and delusive schemes of our neighbours. We had, in many respects, lost sight of the blessings which Heaven had poured upon us ; and were eager to snatch, through right and wrong, the vain



toys which glittered in our view. The Tree of Liberty, like the Tree of Good and Evil, was placed before us, and we were encouraged by the tempter to eat thereof, and “we should be as gods.” We had almost forgotten the substantial joys of our Paradise; and were, perhaps, on the point of giving ear to these deceitful words. The true patriotism of Britain seemed to be fast yielding to the false patriotism of revolution and rebellion. Yet, by the mercy of God, we have been preserved. That nation in which the fire was kindled, and from which it has spread over other nations, has since become a curse to itself, and a scourge to its neighbours. We have been preserved,—and our present danger serves only to rekindle the ancient spirit of our country, which seemed ready to be extinguished! Surely we have learned, at last, and feel, in a manner not to be effaced from our recol-



lection, that *our* patriotism consists of loyalty to the King,—of reverence for the Constitution,—and of the determined purpose never to permit an hostile foot to advance upon British ground ! Thus, my brethren, let us hope that the Patriotism of Britons is improved,—and that the correction of the Almighty arm has inspired them with that virtue which, under the protection of God, is the only infallible security for a nation.

Have we become equally convinced that His favour is necessary, and that there is no safety for a people who live in the contempt of his government and laws ? Have we “put away the accursed “thing from among us?” Are we ashamed of that gross neglect of his holy ordinances, and the ridicule so often attached to that Religion which he gave us from Heaven ? Have we learnt to “kiss the Son, “lest he be angry, and we perish from

“ the way, when his wrath is kindled but  
“ a little ?” Do we bow with reverence to  
the mysteries of the Christian faith, and  
humble ourselves in the dust, repenting  
us of our sins ? Are we thankful to God  
that he has not permitted his holy name  
to be rooted out from our land ? And are  
we determined to guard the sacred ark,  
which, notwithstanding all our offences,  
he has committed to our trust ? Do we  
thank him that pure religion is still pro-  
fessed among us,—and that, while the  
nations of Europe are bewildered in su-  
perstition and infidelity, we retain among  
us the true Protestant faith unimpaired,  
although, alas ! too often disregarded ? Do  
we sincerely join with the King upon the  
throne, and with all the lights and guar-  
dians of the realm, in prayers to the Al-  
mighty, that he will shield and cover us,  
and guide us safely through these perilous  
storms ? Do we pray from our hearts that

he "will correct us with judgment, not  
"in his anger, lest he bring us to  
"nothing?"

If such are our sentiments and feelings, then we are secure. A nation burning with patriotism, and devoted to God, may bid defiance to the world. We may then hope, too, that our correction will, in no long time, be terminated; and that the nation at present employed in executing the Divine vengeance, will yet be brought down from her pride. "Babylon," says the Prophet, "hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad." What follows? "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed!"

Yet, my brethren, we pray not for the destruction of our enemies,—we pray for their deliverance. We pray that they

may be freed from the yoke of foreign usurpation, and brought again under the mild dominion of their native kings. May the throne of their tyrant totter beneath him, and all his blood-guiltiness be requited! Violence and proud oppression cannot endure for ever;—Eternal Justice will not sleep! The time, we trust, will yet come, when the awful denunciations of Isaiah will apply to this presumptuous man:—“Thy pomp is brought down to  
“the grave, and the noise of thy viols;  
“the worm is spread under thee, and  
“the worms cover thee. How art thou  
“fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of  
“the morning! How art thou cast down  
“to the ground which didst weaken the  
“nations! For thou hast said in thine  
“heart, I will ascend into Heaven,—I  
“will exalt my throne above the stars of  
“God,—I will ascend above the heights  
“of the clouds,—I will be like the Most

“ High ! Yet thou shalt be brought  
“ down to hell, to the sides of the pit.  
“ They that see thee shall narrowly look  
“ upon thee, and consider thee, saying,  
“ Is this the man that made the earth to  
“ tremble ; that did shake kingdoms ;  
“ that made the world as a wilderness,  
“ and destroyed the cities thereof ; that  
“ opened not the house of his prisoners ?  
“ All the kings of the nations, even all of  
“ them, lie in glory, every one in his own  
“ house.—Thou shalt not be joined with  
“ them in burial, because thou hast de-  
“ stroyed thy land, and slain thy people :  
“ The seed of evil doers shall never be  
“ renowned ! ”



## DISCOURSE XIX.

ON NATIONAL PIETY. \*

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ISAIAH, ii. 22.

*“ Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his  
“ nostrils, for wherein is he to be ac-  
“ counted of ?”*

SUCH is the concluding reflection with which the Prophet contemplates one of those scenes of public misery upon which his thoughts are sometimes forced to dwell, and which throw an occasional

\* Preached on the Fast Day, February 26, 1807.

cloud over the beautiful anticipations of Evangelical light and glory, that seem more congenial to the glowing character of his soul. "Enter into the rock," says he, "and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

The occasion of our meeting this day,

my brethren, naturally leads me to apply to the present aspect of the world these memorable expressions of Isaiah, with this remarkable peculiarity, indeed, in the application, that what he only predicted, we have seen,—what he saw, “as “through a glass darkly,” we have beheld “face to face.” Another disastrous year has passed over our heads, during which the cloud of war has collected a deeper gloom, and burst with still heavier fury upon the devoted nations. We have seen well-appointed armies advancing with confidence into the field, whence they “have been chased as the chaff of “the mountains before the wind, and “like a rolling thing before the whirl- “wind!”—We have beheld “cities made “an heap, and defenced cities a ruin;” kings hurled from their thrones, and driven into disgraceful exile; the licentious sword of conquest sweeping be-

fore it whatever antiquity had rendered venerable, or modern genius and prosperity had lifted high ; and from the grave of Empires we hear the voice which cries to us, with the Prophet, saying, “ Cease ye from man !”

One individual alone seems to bid defiance to the common doom ;—one dark minister of vengeance rides securely “ in the whirlwind, and directs the storm ;” —one towering genius seems to concentrate in himself all the prowess and all the fortune of his species, and even to arrogate the possession of endowments which belong only to superior natures. Yet, proud spirit ! there is an Eye which marks “ thy goings out and thy comings in ;” there is a Hand which holds “ the bridle within thy lips, and can turn thee back to the place from whence thou camest.” “ Thy breath, also, is in thy nostrils.” Mighty in power to-day ;—to-

morrow thou, too, mayest be levelled with the clods of the valley !

In the midst, my brethren, of these gathering evils, while the earth is thus terribly shaken, and men are flying in despair almost into the holes, and into the caves of the rocks, and the tide of desolation is every day rolling nearer ourselves—we have been deeply afflicted with internal wounds ! “ For behold,” continues the Prophet, “ the Lord, the Lord of Hosts “ doth take away from Jerusalem, and “ from Judah, the staff and the stay, the “ mighty man, and the man of war, the “ Judge and the Prophet, and the prudent “ and the ancient, and the honourable man, “ and the counsellor, and the eloquent “ orator ! ”—Scarce had we dropt the tear of national gratitude over the great Leader of our Naval war, when another lofty spirit departed from us : that “ Pillar of State,” upon whom we had so long securely leant



in the hour of peril : that firm and unbending soul which was formed to sustain “ the weight of mightiest monarchies,” and which, while advancing with unabated vigour to encounter its greatest struggle, sunk beneath a shattered and exhausted frame ! We then turned our eyes to a generous rival, who alone seemed to fill, in our imaginations, the melancholy blank,—and to his “ comprehensive head,” and “ uncorrupted heart,” we now entrusted our last hope of “ all Europe saved, yet Britain not betrayed.” \* That stay has likewise failed us : and now our ablest counsellors, and most “ eloquent orators,” all their animosities at an end, sleep in kindred graves, insensible to the sound of their country’s dan-

- \* Who would not praise Patritio’s high desert,  
His hand unstain’d, his uncorrupted heart,  
His comprehensive head ! All interests weigh’d,  
All Europe sav’d, yet Britain not betray’d !

POPE :

ger, nor ever again to be roused from that dread repose, till they are summoned by "the tongue of Angels" to enter upon an higher and an eternal career!—Valour, virtue, wisdom, thank Heaven! remain; "but how are the mighty fallen, and the beauty of Israel slain in her high places:" and when we contemplate the unseasonable loss of by far our greatest men, shall we not again repeat with the Prophet, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

From this black abyss of danger and calamity, we naturally lift our eyes, my brethren, and inquire what are our Duties, and what our Hopes. To both inquiries, the answer of the Prophet is the same, "Cease ye from man!" And when we are required to "cease from man," to whom can we turn but unto God?—It is, indeed, a blind delusion to suppose, that, amidst these disorders of nations, no pre-

siding mind is secretly bringing light from darkness, that no spirit is moving over the troubled "face of the waters," and harmonizing the chaos of the moral world. While men are driving their petty schemes, and ambition is enjoying its momentary triumph, the great unseen Ruler of the universe is making the "wrath of men to praise him," and is turning all their short-sighted views, and little policy, to the mighty end of the good of his creation. Reverence for this Supreme Power, while it is the only solid foundation of the goodness of individual men, is likewise the main-spring of the dignity and worth of nations; and I believe it may confidently be affirmed, that there never yet existed a people whom we can denominate truly great, that were not actuated in their national spirit by a deep feeling of Piety.

Even in ancient times, before the lights of Revelation arose, we shall find

the leading powers of the world, and the conspicuous seasons of their greatness, to be those in which Religion, influenced by its holy spirit, the public mind of the nation, in which the bonds of civil life were sanctified by a feeling of their connection with higher things, and men were wise, and just, and temperate, not merely from a sense of present advantage, but from a steady sentiment, that such is the appointment of Heaven. Of that illustrious people, so long the leading object of ancient history, and on whose virtue and dignity the eye of youthful ardour fixes with so keen a feeling of delight, it was justly affirmed, that if in many things they were inferior to others, in piety to the Gods they were superior to all.—Of our own nation, religion has long been a striking characteristic, and notwithstanding the insidious attempts which have of late years been

made to deprive us of that invaluable principle, we may yet bless God, that we hold a pre-eminence here, and that we are at least the most faithful amidst “ a crooked and perverse generation.” Yet, I fear, our history can tell us of better and purer times than these, of greater faith and zeal, and more genuine Christian virtue ; it can point with triumph to a “ noble army of martyrs ;” and from the tombs of our fathers, there issues a voice which joins the warning cry of the Prophet, and of our impending dangers, and calls upon us to revive and cherish those decaying sentiments, for which they contended with their blood.

Nor must the truth be concealed, that if there ever were times in which piety and its concomitant virtues were more felt among us than now, our excuse is the



less, inasmuch as there never was a time in which their necessity was so apparent, or in which so great an opportunity has been afforded us of rearing them upon firm and impregnable foundations. Enjoying a long course of unexampled prosperity, and more conspicuously blest by Providence than any other people, we have hitherto, at a distance from the storm and the conflict, had full leisure to meditate on the infinite value of those great master-principles, the failure and corruption of which, in the world around us, have "turned it upside down." We have seen but too clearly the dread effects of that poison which has been so widely diffused and deeply imbibed, that intoxicating draught which has made the nations mad, which has deranged every sentiment of worth and dignity among men, and converted the choicest

gifts of Heaven to the ruin and degradation of that nature, which they were designed to honour and to improve.

We have seen, alas ! genius and science abused and distorted from their true ends ; and whatever others may pretend, we cannot profess ignorance of the ends which alone are genuine and true. We have seen in other lands Superstition sap the fabric of society, and afterwards Atheism level it with the ground ; while we, enjoying the blessing of a Reformed Church, know in what manner Philosophy can lend arms to the faith which she reveres. Religion sits upon our throne ; we have seen, in foreign realms, infidelity gain the ear of kings, and then “ betray them with a kiss ! ” — One royal apostate (the lesson is awful ! ) joined the rebellious crew of prostitute sophists, and stained the glories of a hero and a legislator, by the despicable affectation of wit

and philosophical fame. A poet of this country, with all the divine fervour of his art, called to that impious king, in the name of the worthies of old, and asked from what motive of vanity the Father of his people could be impelled to “affront the holiest bands of civil order,” or to form the desperate design of loosening earth from Heaven.\* In our

\* The allusion here is to an Ode of Akenside, addressed to the Great Frederick of Prussia, from which I beg leave to transcribe the two concluding stanzas.

“ O evil foresight, and pernicious care !  
 “ Wilt thou, indeed, abide by this appeal ?  
 “ Shall we the lessons of thy pen compare  
 “ With private honour, or with public zeal ?  
 “ Whence, then, at things divine, those darts of scorn ?  
 “ Why are the woes, which virtuous men have borne  
 “ For sacred truth, a prey to laughter given ?  
 “ What fiend, what foe of Nature, urged thy arm,  
 “ The Almighty of his sceptre to disarm,  
 “ To push this earth adrift, and leave it loose from Heaven ?

“ Ye God-like shades of legislators old,  
 “ Ye who made Rome victorious, Athens wise ;  
 “ Ye first of mortals, with the bless'd enroll'd,  
 “ Say, did not horror in your bosoms rise,

day, we have seen the iniquities of that king terribly visited upon his descendants ; and weak and perfidious councils undermining a throne, which his genius and valour had reared in vain on the sandy foundations of impiety.

“ Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings,  
“ be instructed ye judges of the earth.  
“ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice  
“ with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest  
“ he be angry, and ye perish from the  
“ way, when his wrath is kindled but a  
“ little. Blessed are all they who put their  
“ trust in him !” And let us, too, my brethren, “ be wise,” to whom these things are held forth “ as ensamples ;” and let

“ When thus by impious vanity impell’d,  
“ A magistrate, a monarch, ye beheld  
“ Affronting civil order’s holiest hands ?  
“ Those bands which ye so labour’d to improve ?  
“ Those hopes and fears of justice from above,  
“ Which tam’d the savage world to your divine commands ?”

us "be instructed," from everything which has passed, and is still passing before our eyes, that the first duty of nations, as well as of individuals, is to "serve the Lord with fear," and to "put their trust in him."

Such, then, is the leading *duty* to which our attention is naturally roused in these dark times, and such, too, let me add, is the only star of *hope* which can shoot a steady ray through the thickening gloom.—When we look a little way into futurity, there are but two prospects before us. The one is, that the storm which is now laying waste the world, will yet reach ourselves, and that all our wisdom and valour must be exerted to the utmost to defend that inheritance which our Fathers have left us. Now, I affirm, that on that day of trial, come when it may, neither our national intrepidity, nor the wisdom of our councils, will be a firm



basis of trust, unless we advance to the struggle with that calm and steady determination to perform our duty through every obstacle which the high principle of Piety alone can inspire. It is, indeed, in this principle alone, that true Patriotism has its beginning and its end. We love our country, not from any little feelings of selfish interest, but because it is the theatre appointed by Providence for the present range of our moral affections, and we feel, when it is in danger, that there is no other resting-place to which these affections can cling, except the belief of a better country reserved for us in the Heavens. Thus, the patriotism which springs from religion, connects in one view present and future things, contends for mortal blessings with immortal arms, and brings into the conflict of Time, all that ardour and glow of sentiment which

is kindled at the opening blaze of Eternity.

Nor must we here overlook, as entirely obscure and mysterious, the moral ends for which God governs the world ; and, as he can thwart the operation of every natural instrument, let us seriously reflect on what character of mind alone he will be inclined to confer success. Plainly, on the high spirit of Piety and Virtue, to promote which over the whole Universe, is, we are led to believe, the ultimate object of his plan, and to the want of which among men, the heavy judgments that now afflict the nations may, with so much likelihood, be referred.

The other prospect, my brethren, is more agreeable. It is pleasing to consider how long this mighty Nation has enjoyed security and repose at home, while she has commanded the esteem and admiration of the world. It is pleasing to

think what a lofty name she has hitherto held, and that, quiet and undisturbed herself, she is yet felt and known wherever the waves can waft, or the winds can blow ! It is pleasing to believe, that this happy security will continue, and that, after the present storm is past, (for it may pass,) she will continue to rise among the nations with undiminished lustre.

But, if such should be the bountiful design of Providence, still it becomes us to be instructed by the events which are passing before us, and, reflecting on the past and the present, to lay a firm foundation for our future hopes. Let us call to mind on what our high name hitherto has rested. Greatly, to be sure, on our national strength and importance ; but still more on our national character ; on the conviction, deeply and widely spread, that we are no vain and frivolous people ;

that we have no mean and despicable vices ; that we are a wise, a sober, an upright, and a religious nation. It is upon this ground of dignity that we stand ; and whatever may be the issue of the present troubles, be it our chief care that we never fall from it. If we should, the spell which has hitherto guarded us will be broken ; if we change our character, and henceforth are known only as a luxurious, a licentious, and a profligate people, then it matters not whether the “ Philip ” of to-day is “ sick or dead.” Our own worthlessness will raise up “ another Philip ” whenever we become “ vessels fitted for destruction.”

My brethren, we are assembled before the God of our Fathers, and are now about to return to our several duties, in the departments to which his Providence has called us. Let us go forth, then, with a firm impression of that Almighty

power and goodness in which our fathers “trusted and were holpen.” At present, our duties are those merely of unnoticed privacy. The time may be at hand when we shall be called to public and more arduous toils ; when the men must advance into the field of battle, and the women must minister to the wounded and the dying ! But, whatever may be our exertions or our trials, let us ever remember that the Eye of Omniscience seeth us, and that, if we act and suffer well, we shall in no case lose our reward.

And now, may the blessing of God continue to descend on the hoary head and the declining years of a holy and virtuous King ;—may the mantle of his piety clothe the loins of his successors ;—and may we, his loyal people, be carried in safety, in our national ark, through the wide-spread deluge which has overwhelmed the world, till the dove, the messenger



of peace, return with the olive leaf, which may bring us assurance that the dry land has again appeared, and that the danger is over and past !

## DISCOURSE XX.

ON NATIONAL FREEDOM. \*

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Acts, xxii. 28.

*“ And the chief captain answered, With  
“ a great sum obtained I this freedom.  
“ And Paul said, But I was free-born.”*

ON the return of St Paul to Jerusalem, after his laborious exertions to spread the faith of Christ among the Gentile nations, he was violently seized by a party of the Jews, who, along with the Roman

\* Preached on the Fast Day, February 9, 1809.

officer exercising the chief authority in that city, were proceeding to treat him with great indignity. Upon this the Apostle declared himself to be a Roman citizen. "Then the chief captain," we are informed, "came and said unto him, 'Tell me, art thou a Roman?' He said, 'yea.' And the chief captain answered, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom.' And Paul said, 'But I was free-born!' Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him."

This incident, my brethren, is of no great moment in itself; but it is interesting, as it opens to us a striking feature in the character of St Paul. Although it was his greatest glory to be accounted the servant of a crucified Master; and al-

though, when the interest of that service required it, he was ready to submit to any worldly degradation, it is yet pleasing to perceive that his high spirit was fully alive to all the dignity attached to the name of a free-born Roman. It is gratifying, likewise, to observe the effect produced by this powerful name, on the miserable beings who persecuted and insulted him, to see them shrink from the lightning of a free-man's eye ; and though they were not deterred from laying their unhallowed hands on the Apostle of the Christian Faith, yet to behold them fall back, overawed, from the champion of Civil Liberty. “ And Paul said, But I “ was free-born !”

What is it that constitutes the force and the charm of this sacred word ? Is it, that the free enjoy, in highest perfection, all the blessings of the social union, —equal laws,—secure possessions,—ac-

tions unrestrained? These, indeed, are great advantages; but they are little when compared with that moral and intellectual dignity which Freedom inspires, that range of thought which comprehends the good of a community, and those large affections which the common good alone can fill. Instead of being forced to watch the caprices of arbitrary sway, the free-man looks with an erect eye to one law alone,—the law of his moral nature. Instead of bending beneath the rod of an earthly lord, he acknowledges but one Master,—the God who gave him being, and all the capacities of virtue and happiness. Under these impressions, even the private affections of his nature assume a loftier form: he loves his children, not for themselves only, but likewise for his country: the friendships which he forms are not merely the solace of his cares, but are likewise his incitements to generous emulation. Even in-



animate nature presents itself to him in a more glowing aspect : he feels that the system of social existence in which he moves, is in unison with the equable harmony of the Universe ; and wherever his footsteps turn, even in solitudes and shades, the sacred form of his Country rises before him !

So powerful, indeed, are these impressions in bringing forward the human character with genuine dignity and splendour, that, when we look back upon the history of the world, we pause upon those periods alone in which nations of free-men appear upon the stage : and in their virtuous struggles, and almost miraculous achievements, we, indeed, feel the greatness of man ; and while our admiration is roused, and our hearts beat high, we are conscious of a loftier character of existence. We turn away from the splendid narratives of conquest, which may dazzle the imagination, but which have

no hold upon the heart, and feel a prouder triumph even in the death of the Patriot, than in all the glories of successful ambition.

Yet, if it be only to such scenes of moral grandeur, in the history of our species, that we can return with much feeling of exultation, alas ! how seldom are they to be found, in comparison with the debasing pictures of the crimes of tyrants, and the degradation of slaves ; and how narrow the bounds of that liberty, for which “ the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now ! ” — There is no need to go back to ancient times for any illustration of this melancholy truth ! It is enough to look at the world as it lies before us ; and God knows, in the disgusting spectacle which it exhibits, we see enough to convince us how imperfect the progress has been of this vital spirit of human society, and gladly

turn again our eyes from so much pollution and degradation.

It is not, however, that over this chaos of nations the spirit of freedom has never moved. It has moved, my brethren, but in its immediate effects it has moved not as a blessing, but as a curse. It has lighted upon elements which were not prepared to receive it, and where it could not foster the seeds of virtue, it has only stirred up the slumbering energies of crime. Not many years have passed since one adventurous people threw off at once all the fetters of ancient power, and came forward with the proud boast that they alone understood the genuine principles of liberty. They gave, indeed, "a great sum" for "this freedom," but they did not "obtain" it; they obtained only a feverish succession of extravagancies, and crimes, and confusion, and misrule; and now they are bending,

in mean submission, at the feet of an idol which themselves have reared, and at whose nod they go forth, with malignant activity, to quench every spark of freedom among men.

From this scene, so hateful and so portentous, how pleasing is it that we can turn to one spot which Liberty still deigns to own, and how great must be our feelings of exultation, when we call to mind, that this sacred ground is OURS ! How sublime the thought, that, while the world around us is groaning under the heavy yoke of servitude, or is struggling, in one instance, with brave, but hitherto, alas ! ineffectual efforts, no usurping foot has yet dared to tread upon our soil ; that our eyes are yet unacquainted with the countenances of the tyrant or the slave ; and that, from the first moment in which they were opened to the light, they have beheld only the

erect forms of national dignity and of civil freedom !—" For we were free-born !"

How inspiring the farther reflection, that to us that degraded world looks as to the ministers of its salvation ; that from our land the spirit of regeneration is yet to arise, and that the practised legions of tyranny even now shrink dismayed from the might that is seated in free-born arms !

To "the signs" of those moral infirmities which have everywhere spread so widely around us, and to the nature of those exertions which are required on our part to overcome them, your attention has already been directed in a strain of political wisdom, and of exalted patriotism, which not only you, my brethren, but the nation, ought to hear. \* Upon these

\* The discourse alluded to in this passage, and others by the same distinguished Preacher, have since been given to the public, and its voice has now fully confirmed what



great themes I will not presume to enter, but will rather request your indulgence to a few more familiar observations, in some measure suggested by the subject

I had here presumed to say of his 'great endowments. That voice, too, has been conveyed in a form which must, of all others, be the most gratifying to his feelings, —not, indeed, in the vulgar shape of honours and preferments, but in that marked and increasing expression of universal gratitude and admiration, which distinctly places his name at the head of all the preachers of the age. Indeed, there are qualities in his preaching to which it would be difficult, I believe, to find a parallel, either in our own, or in any former time. That tone of dove-like gentleness, that pure and unclouded wisdom, far more than the graces of his language, and the glow of his imagery, are excellencies which seem to me unexampled in the history of pulpit-eloquence; and, in his sermons on public occasions, his undeviating trust in the moral government of the world, and the calm steadiness of his hopes, even in the worst of times, have thrown around him, almost, the mantle of Prophecy.—Admirable, however, as his discourses must ever be esteemed, there is still something wanting to their effect as they appear in publication; for there never was a preacher to whom are more strictly applicable the words which were originally spoken of the greatest orator of antiquity, when, to those who testified the most lively applause on hearing one of his orations read, it was so finely observed, "What, then, would you have said, if you had heard Himself?"

of the text, and more within the reach of my powers.

We are naturally led, then, in one view of the subject, to reflect with gratitude on the peculiar advantages we enjoy, not only as partakers of a free constitution, but as inheritors of it, by a settled and unquestioned right of succession. We are not only free, but, like the Apostle, we are "free born." We have attained our liberty, not only without money and without price, but we have been trained, from our infancy, in all those generous and liberal maxims which it is its greatest boast to inspire. They who have purchased their freedom by their own exertions, necessarily hold it by a more insecure tenure, and are more apt to forfeit or to disgrace it by their vices and excesses, than those whose title has ceased to be disputed, and who have been long familiar with its principles, and secure of its rewards.

The free-born alone, then, will generally be found to be secure of their freedom, or worthy of it; and, while they move with calm and conscious dignity through the high career of their duties, those who have purchased their freedom may frequently be seen, as in the passage before us, instigating the disorders, and abetting the insults of the multitude.

But let us farther reflect, that, while Freedom is thus one of the chief sources, both of public and private virtue, it yet cannot continue to exist except through the exercise of virtue, and that, by the invariable order of Providence, the liberty and the stability of nations are established on the moral attributes of the individuals who compose them. The first lessons of public and private virtue are the same: they coincide in their elements: they are both equally founded on the firm principles of morality and religion. Where-

ever these principles are diffused throughout a nation, and embraced with devoted attachment, that nation will become great and free ;—wherever they are lost, or but feebly preserved, the people who are in such a case are verging to slavery and degradation. These plain truths all history confirms ; but if all other history were lost, that melancholy page which has been written before us in characters of blood, would be sufficient to prove them.

Why did that people, who have in our day “ turned the world upside down,” fail to obtain that splendid freedom which their glowing fancy predicted ; and why, instead of becoming, as they boasted, the emancipators of that world, are they now merely extending those tenfold chains in which their own degraded necks are bound ? Was it that they wanted will, or energy, or power ?

Would they not give “a great sum” for “this freedom?” Alas! they gave the sum of all their moral feeling, and all their religious faith; they threw into one extravagant heap all the pillars on which human society is reared, and all the ornaments by which it is graced: they even raised their impious hand against the majesty of Heaven itself, and would have torn down the eternal throne, and piled it on the costly ruins which their madness had accumulated!—“Verily, verily, they have had their reward!” And they now stand forth “an ensample” to men, that where the national mind is corrupt, there no seeds of freedom will grow; that, from the polluted hearts of a people, the waters of public, as well as of private bitterness flow; and that, from this unseen source, they at length come into open day, and burst into a deluge red with human blood, and sweeping before



it all the mounds of the security and happiness of nations.

Let us now contemplate the reverse of this picture ; we shall find it in the history of a nobler people—in the history of those illustrious men who delivered to us the inheritance of freedom. They, too, had their seasons of civil and religious excesses, yet, in the midst of these, they were never abandoned by principle : they might err, indeed, for they were men, but theirs were the errors of high and pure minds. It was never from throwing off, but in drawing, perhaps, too tight, the fetters of religion, that they were sometimes to be blamed : and the God whom they feared forgave them their excesses, and blessed their virtuous toils, till at length they reared on the rock of the British constitution, that church which they revered, and that liberty which they loved. They, too, gave “ a great sum ” for “ this

“ freedom :” but it was the sum of patient thought, and of persevering exertion, the sum of unbending faith, and of uncorrupted integrity;—the sum of a loyalty, which only hard necessity could shake, and of obedience to law, which not even the love of that freedom could overcome !—They likewise “ have had their reward !” They have left behind them the noblest monument of legislative wisdom which the world has yet beheld : they have left names which will live as long as the memory of virtue remains among men : and now, from those celestial seats, where they are crowned with immortal wreaths, they look down upon their free-born sons, and tell them, in this hour of peril, that the inheritance of freedom can only be preserved by the same uncorrupted principles by which it was won.

Go, then, in obedience to this holy call, my brethren, and say not, that in


your private stations you can be of no service to your country. Go to your own hearts, and root out from them every thing that is base, and degenerate, and infirm. Look to the ancestors from whom you are sprung, and walk in the steps of their faith and their integrity : Go to the volume of salvation, which they left in your hands, and draw from its pure fountains the streams of inspiring hope and unpolluted righteousness. Do this for yourselves, and do it for your children. When we examine the course of great men, we forget the simple beginnings from which it rose ; Yet it was in the shades of domestic privacy that our Abercrombies and our Nelsons first listened to the call of duty ; and at this hour, when a venerable mother is weeping over her heroic son,\* whose name, alas ! has too soon been classed with

\* Sir John Moore.

theirs, while all the gratitude of his Country, mingling its tears with hers, will scarcely avail to calm her sorrows, she will yet feel one exulting throb when she remembers that from *her* lips he first heard the sacred name of VIRTUE !

Among the moral qualities, there is one disposition of mind which the present circumstances of our country and of mankind call upon me particularly to recommend to your cultivation : I mean FORTITUDE,—fortitude to act, and fortitude to suffer. When we look forward into futurity, no prospect whatever appears of any speedy termination to the miseries of the world : That hope which we were lately so willing to indulge is now, to say the least, heavily overcast. The generous sympathy which led us to support the struggles of a gallant people has only involved ourselves in deeper calamities : The tide of atro-

cious usurpation has still proceeded in its infuriate course, and we are unable to foretell at what appointed limit the word of Omnipotence will say, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Wherever the prospect of resistance appears, there, too, doubtless, we shall be found, abetting the spirit of resistance; and there, too, we must expect to hear the menace of the tyrant repeated, and "the mothers of England" must again prepare to mourn.

 Yet, my brethren, if the world around us is destined to submit to that unhappy man, who has been taken up by the demon of Ambition into "an exceeding high mountain," from whence he has been shewn "all the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory," and has *yielded* to the voice which said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down



“and worship *me* :” If we must still retreat before him, yet I trust we shall retreat like that illustrious band \* who, after their arduous toils and achievements, are once more treading their native soil, amid the triumph and the tears of their country ; and that, after no inglorious retreat, we shall, like them, turn round upon an insulting foe, and on our own shores, the last bulwark of liberty, again make him feel what its energies are able to perform ! Not building upon fallacious hopes, it indeed becomes us now to look forward with determined spirits to that last and dreadful conflict, and with the true intrepidity of Britons, to prepare for fighting the battles of the world upon British ground.

And now, may the God of battles strengthen our hearts and steel our arms ; may he clothe us with the spirit of our

\* An allusion to the battle of Corunna,

Fathers, and arm us with their steady principle, their devoted patriotism, and their unconquerable fortitude ; and if, like them, we are at last called to give “a great “ sum” for the preservation of “this free-  
“ dom,” may he so bless our exertions, that we too may, like them, leave our children “free-born.”

## DISCOURSE XXI.

ON THE RISE AND CHARACTER OF  
CONQUERORS. \*

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ISAIAH, xlv. 1, 4, 5.

*“ Thus saith the Lord to Cyrus, whose  
“ right hand I have holden, to subdue  
“ nations before him, and I will loose  
“ the loins of kings,—for Jacob, my ser-  
“ vant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I  
“ have even called thee by thy name.—  
“ I am the Lord, and there is none else ;  
“ there is no God beside me : I girded  
“ thee, though thou hast not known me.”*

THESE prophetic words, my brethren,  
convey sentiments of no common so-

\* Preached on the day of the General Fast, 1st March  
1810.

lemnity. They shew us the hand of an overruling Providence, secretly directing the arm of man, even where the splendours of apparent power seem least to acknowledge a superior. Many ages before the conqueror, who is here addressed by name, had begun his brilliant career, it was foreseen in the visions of Jewish prophecy, and an humble individual on whom probably *his* proud eye would not have deigned to look, was commissioned by the Most High God to describe his “goings out and his comings in,” and to call to him, with the voice and the authority of Heaven! “Thus saith the Lord to Cyrus,—I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.”

This lofty address of the Prophet in-

volves truths which are equally applicable to every similar situation of human affairs. In whatever period of time an individual arises, whose genius and whose prowess are destined to change the form of empires, “to subdue nations before him, and loose the loins of kings,” we may conceive him to be addressed by the Prophet, and “even called by name.” What is asserted of Cyrus, may likewise be affirmed of every conqueror in every age. All are equally undiscerning ministers of designs which they themselves have not framed, and are “girded” to battle by one whom they have not known.

That the illustration of such truths is suitable to the present occasion of our assembling, I need not, my brethren, explain to you. Year after year our eyes have been wearied with beholding, and our hearts sick at the thought of that



tide of conquest which has rolled around us, till all the nations over which it has flowed, have been swallowed in its waves! We have seen the pride and the violence of usurping power rushing on unchecked, or checked only to return with accumulated force; and when we look into futurity, no cheering beam yet rises to enlighten us, and no commanding voice is yet heard to say, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." In such a situation, the feebleness of despair is too apt to seize upon us, while we are dazzled by admiration, or blinded by fear, or weakened by internal discord and mutual recrimination! Man, we are apt to suppose, is abandoned by Heaven, a dark fatality governs the world, or, if there is yet any providential administration, ability alone is regarded and permitted to triumph over weakness,

while justice and humanity, and every noble and generous sentiment, are trodden under foot, and are of no avail.

It is in these moments that Religion meets us “at the gates, at the entry of “the city,”—that she “throws open,” for our reception, “her everlasting doors,” and, from the darkness and despair of a lower world, lifts our purged eyes to that light of faith and of truth which streams from the sanctuary of God. She teaches us that the same hand which regulates the material creation, upholds, amid all its disorders, the rectitude of a moral world; that the passing tyranny of man is but as the thunder which refreshes the Heavens, or the whirlwind that sweeps the ocean; that it is not “*man* whom we ought to “fear, or the son of man, who shall be “made as grass;” but that we must learn to bow before Him “who stretched forth

“ the heavens, and laid the foundations  
“ of the earth,” who can say “ to the deep,  
“ be dry, and I will dry up all thy rivers;”  
who saith to Cyrus, “ I am the Lord,—  
“ there is no God beside me: I gird-  
“ ed thee, though thou hast not known  
“ me.”

In entering upon the reflections which the words of the Prophet suggest to us, it may, in the first place, be remarked, that, in all the histories of extensive conquest, which the course of ages presents to our observation, we shall invariably find traces of preparation and design which indicate an agency superior to that of man. It is not alone to the character of the conqueror we must look, when we would explain the prodigies of his valour. We shall rather trace their origin in the situation of the nations which he subdues,—in the disaffection of their people,—the incapacity of their rulers,—

the perplexity of their plans,—or their blindness to danger. When the conqueror begins his course, he feels that a mightier Power has already preceded him,—that One “has gone before him” who “has loosed the loins of kings,—“opened the two-leaved gates,—made “the crooked places straight,—broken “in pieces the gates of brass,—and cut “asunder the bars of iron.” The field of death is prepared for him, and is “already ready white to the harvest:” *he* is only commissioned to reap it with his sword.

We find, too, when we examine the character of any of those ministers of vengeance, that it is commonly wonderfully adapted to the circumstances in which he acts. If he is destined to overrun rude and barbarous tribes, he is distinguished merely for the qualities of fierceness and valour: if he leads

the armies of a noble and generous people, he exhibits traits of real magnanimity and clemency : if he lives in an age of fanaticism, he comes forward with the pretensions of a prophet or a saint : or if he rises in that awful period, when false philosophy has obliterated the principles which superstition had debased, he then is surrounded with all that lustre of talents which dazzles the imaginations of those who have lost the sense and the admiration of virtue, and can clothe himself at will under specious appearances, which bewilder even when they do not deceive. Accordingly, we shall find in all those tempests of human affairs, that no other species of character, but the particular one which is employed, could have guided the whirlwind, and that, as the previous course of events is prepared for him, so is he likewise adapted to them.



There is another circumstance, my brethren, in this view of the subject, which must not entirely be overlooked. I mean the circumstance of *fortune*, which, in all long trains of unexampled success, strikes us as something wonderful and supernatural. We must admire, no doubt, that ready ability which can profit by every fortunate conjuncture, and can repair every instance of mischance ; and here, too, we perceive a mind nicely adapted to the game which it has to play ; but in the very idea of *fortune* we recognise a power superior to that of man,—an assisting hand which prepares and co-operates,—a direction of events which corresponds with the aims of the human agent. That there is something of this nature in the success which attends them, these heroes of fortune themselves, for the most part believe ; and although they seldom “know Him by whom they are gird-

“ed, and who holds their right hands,” they yet will speak of their propitious *star*, or some other equally fanciful and mysterious influence. It is dangerous, indeed, to pursue observations of this kind too far, since the ways of Providence are intentionally obscure. “Verily,” continues the Prophet, “Thou art a God that “hidest thyself, O God of Israel.” Yet, to a certain extent, they are useful and important, and are sufficient to raise our thoughts from the mere outward appearances of human enterprise, to the secret direction and the magnificent designs of Heaven!

What, then, let us, in the second place, inquire, what is the nature of those designs? Why should the violence and caprice of individual ambition be at times permitted to unhinge and to destroy all the order and the happiness of nations? Why should injus-

tice and oppression be let loose upon the earth; while all the animating principles of public and of private duty seem to be deprived of their efficacy? Not, surely, from any favour to crime and violence: not, surely, from any partial regard to the designs of unprincipled ambition:—nor can we suppose that Providence should be interested in elevating to the height of power, the most worthless, perhaps, of the human race, merely that he may glitter for a time the passing wonder of his age, and run through the few years of a restless and feverish existence amidst outward splendour and inward misery.—There are times in the histories of nations when the internal frame of society is loosened, and when the corruptions of governors, and the disaffection of the governed, are preparing revolution and change. In these cases, the sweeping sword of conquest may at once perform,

what long periods of civil dissension would have attempted in vain; and freed from the weight of corrupt institutions, the genius of nations may, in some happier age, break forth with its native energy. There may, too, be systems of superstition, whose towers and bulwarks are indissolubly connected with those of political institutions, and whose melancholy shade cannot be dispelled till all are swept away in one common inundation!—Such are some instances, and many others might be named, of the beneficial effects of rapid and extensive conquests on the political aspect of the world, by which they more than compensate to mankind for the present evils which attend them.

Nor yet are we to think that these evils are without their use, and are not themselves the natural parents of greater good. They come upon men either as punishments or as warnings! They come upon nations whose powers of resistance

are weakened by the abandonment of all the principles of duty : upon kings, who, in the vain security of undisturbed power, have equally forgotten the welfare of their people, and their responsibility to God : upon dissolute nobles, who have lost the sense of public virtue, and trifle away their insignificant hours in infidel enjoyment : upon churches, whose religion is craft : upon the learned, whose wisdom is impiety : upon a corrupted and deluded people, who have no principles of moral exertion, who are stupid in degeneracy, or ferocious in enthusiasm ! These are the general features of nations upon which such evils are doomed to fall ; and it is only from the deep feeling of the misery of that political degradation to which their vices and their weakness have led, that, in the silent hours of suffering, they can be elevated to a nobler spirit.—When kings are hurled from their



thrones, they feel that they are men : when the great are driven into exile and poverty, they learn that life is not a dream of pleasure : when the pride of churches is brought low, the flame of devotion rises from the altar : when the vanity of human philosophy is felt, the wise lift their eyes to Heaven : and from the houses of peasants, hardy in poverty, and thoughtful from experience,—pure in faith, and firm in virtue,—that spirit of steady patriotism will one day spring, which shall yet renovate a degraded world !

These, my brethren, are the true lights in which we ought to regard those awful dispensations of Providence, when the violence of man is let loose upon devoted nations ; and when “ the potsherds of the “ earth ” seem permitted to “ strive with “ their Maker.” “ Thus saith the Lord to “ Cyrus,—For Jacob, my servant’s sake, “ and Israel mine elect, I have called

“thee,” to sweep before thee the disorders of human policy, and to prepare the way for the reign of Eternal Righteousness : to sit down upon kings and nations, and to probe their infirmities to the quick, till, “from the rising of the sun and from the west, they shall know there is none beside me.” Thou art my minister of “darkness and evil,” through whom I shall “create light and peace.” “Drop down, ye heavens,” continues the Prophet, with all the fervour of inspiration, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness : let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation.—I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth : I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.—Assemble yourselves and come ; draw near together ye that are escaped of the nations :—look unto me and be ye saved

“ all the ends of the earth !—I have sworn  
“ by myself; the word is gone out of my  
“ mouth in righteousness, and shall not  
“ return, that unto me every knee shall  
“ bow ;—in the Lord shall all the seed of  
“ Israel be justified, and shall glory !”

Such are the animating hopes of prophecy, even amidst the darkest scenes of the world ; and thus it is that the Spirit of God, moving over the chaos of human affairs, says, “ Let there be light, and  
“ there is light !” But from these heights of faith, we must descend to that world as it lies before us ; and, mourning over the miseries which it is yet doomed to suffer, must take warning from them for ourselves ! If there ever was a nation which has been peculiarly distinguished by the favour of Heaven, surely, my brethren, we are that people. Possessing the noblest institutions of Religion and Government, we may almost say, in the

words of the legislator of Israel, "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" These were the blessings conferred on the wisdom, the piety, and the patriotism of our fathers; and under their influence we have continued to prosper in the sight of surrounding nations, who have long said of us, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

I will not suppose that we are now degenerate and fallen; the Father of his people still sits upon our throne; the palaces of our land are accessible to the calls of religious and social duty; and the cottages of our poor are smiling in industry and contentment. That tremendous torrent of Divine vengeance, which is sweeping



before it all the bulwarks of empire, still rolls around our shores, innocent as the waves of our ocean ; and, while we have wept over it with tears of blood, and mourned many a gallant son plunged for ever in its gloomy abyss, the ark of Britain still rides secure and honoured, amidst the deluge which has drowned a world ! What has been to others a punishment, has been to us only a warning ; but a warning awful as can be uttered by the voice of God !

We have seen the fall of other nations ; we have seen the origin of their fall in the decay of religious principle ; in the failure of public virtue ; in the vices and follies of the great ; and in the corruption and disaffection of the low. Are these things beginning even here ?  
“ Then take heed to yourselves, and  
“ keep your souls diligently, lest ye for-  
“ get the things which your eyes have



“ seen, and lest they depart from your  
“ hearts all the days of your lives ; but  
“ teach them your sons, and your sons’  
“ sons : Take heed unto yourselves, lest  
“ ye forget the covenant of the Lord your  
“ God, for the Lord your God is a con-  
“ suming fire, even a jealous God !”

## DISCOURSE XXII.

### NATIONAL BLESSINGS AND AFFLICTIONS. \*

#### PSALMS, lxxv. 1, 2.

*“ Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion,  
“ and unto thee shall the vow be per-  
“ formed. O thou that hearest prayer,  
“ unto thee shall all flesh come.”*

IN the Psalm, my brethren, which opens with these words of exalted piety, the King of Israel describes, in the finest strain of poetry, the trust which he reposes in the power and the goodness of

\* Preached 18th November 1810, the day appointed by his Majesty as a general thanksgiving for the abundant harvest of that year.

God. "Thou wilt answer us," he says,  
 "O God of our salvation; who art the  
 "confidence of all the ends of the earth,  
 "and of them that are afar off upon the  
 "sea: who by thy strength settest fast  
 "the mountains, being girded with pow-  
 "er; who stillest the noise of the seas,  
 "the noise of their waves, and the tu-  
 "mult of the people." After this strik-  
 ing representation of the Divine omni-  
 potency, which shews us the whole world of  
 nature and of man prostrate at the foot-  
 stool of its Maker, the Psalmist rises into  
 the most glowing description of that su-  
 preme bounty which supplies the wants  
 of the creatures. "Thou makest the  
 "outgoings of the morning and even-  
 "ing to rejoice: Thou visitest the earth,  
 "and waterest it: Thou makest it soft  
 "with showers: Thou blessest the spring-  
 "ing thereof: Thou crownest the year  
 "with thy goodness, and Thy paths drop

“fatness : they drop upon the pastures of  
 “the wilderness, and the little hills re-  
 “joice on every side : the pastures are  
 “clothed with flocks, the valleys, also,  
 “are covered over with corn ; they shout  
 “for joy, they also sing.”

The instances of power and goodness which David exemplifies in these passages, are of a nature which every pious mind must contemplate with the deepest emotion. They are chosen, however, at the same time, with a very happy reference to the peculiarity of his own situation. He was a king, and in reflecting on the past history of his adventurous reign, nothing could occur to his mind as a more remarkable proof of the Divine power than that wonderful mechanism of human society by which all the jarring interests and passions of men are kept within the bounds of civil order ; and he naturally was led to perceive the

hand of God as conspicuously displayed in quelling "the tumult of the people," as in "stilling the noise of the seas." He was a king who delighted in the happiness of his subjects, and the occasion which excites his liveliest gratitude is the view of that universal bounty which "covereth the valleys over with corn," and "clothes the pastures with flocks," which makes the voice of joy to be heard throughout all the land, and cheers the labourer in his cottage no less than the king upon the throne. It is this instance of the Divine goodness which, in a peculiar manner, warms his benevolent heart, and calls forth those strains of piety which have ever been esteemed the model of the purest devotion.

The subject, my brethren, to which our attention is this day directed, is the same instance of the paternal goodness of God which long ago awakened the gratitude



of the king of Israel. The same watchful Providence which listened to the daily prayer of him and his people, has continued to hear the imploring voice of every succeeding generation : seed-time and harvest have regularly returned at their appointed seasons, and the same hand which ministered to our fathers is now pouring out its bounty upon us. The very constancy of this beneficence is the cause which renders us, perhaps, so little attentive to it ; we are apt to ascribe it in an indistinct manner of thought to the course of nature ; and, as in all the other instances of the regular administration of Providence, we too often lose sight of the wisdom or of the goodness which are silently operating. Yet if it is necessary to recal our wandering thoughts, a very slight degree of reflection, I presume, is all that is required, to make us fully sensible of that Divine bounty which

is now diffusing its blessings among our people.

To a mind which rejoices in the happiness of man, there is not, perhaps, a more delightful subject of contemplation than that of an abundant harvest. When we go forth into the fields, and behold them loaded with the sustenance of human life, we cannot but follow in imagination the scenes of future felicity and contentment. We hear them predicted in the song of the reaper, and behold them typified in the luxuriance and the glow of creation. Even "the wilderness and "the solitary place are then glad, and "the desert itself blossoms as the rose."

Is it possible, in these circumstances, to refrain from sympathizing with the happiness of the industrious poor, who now look forward to the year which is to come without alarm, and in the animating hope of enjoying domestic plenty,

and of seeing their families happy around them? Can we pourtray to ourselves any scenes which more distinctly mark the universal care of the common Father, or in which the feelings and sympathies of benevolence lead so directly to piety?

It is not, however, the pictures of individual felicity alone to which, on these occasions, our imagination is conducted. We see the tranquillity and the union of a whole people. We behold them, from a sense of private happiness, joining in the cause of public safety, and more warmly devoted to that country which the favour of Heaven has so conspicuously blessed.

How widely different those feelings with which we contemplate an approaching scarcity; when we fear to think of the pallid cheeks and the shivering limbs of the poor; of those who, from a life of industry, are driven to solicit the scanty supply of charity,—or of that still

more pitiable class who are ashamed to beg, and who, while they watch by the beds of their dying children, make their wants known only to God!

From these scenes of private misery, we go on to predict public dissatisfaction. We see the turbulent spirits in the state seizing those occasions of wretchedness, to exasperate and inflame the people, and leading into the train of disaffection and complaint, even those who are naturally disposed to peace. We see the frame of society in hazard of being broken; and if there are at the same time other public dangers and calamities, we know no hand but that of Heaven, which can save the nation from destruction.

Such, then, is a very imperfect sketch of the blessings which every one must perceive are the natural consequences of an abundant harvest, and of



the evils which it prevents.—We are at present enjoying these blessings ;—the time, however, is not long past since we foreboded the opposite evils. The present season of plenty followed, as we know, a season of more than common apprehension, and to the calamities of war, and to the burdens of the people, we feared that the vengeance of the Almighty was about to add the miseries of famine ! We have found, however, that he threatened merely to recal our wandering attention, and to teach us, that it is to Him in the hour of distress, that “ all flesh must “ come,” and to Him alone in the hour of joy, that praises and thanksgivings are due. Grateful for this unspeakable benefit, which has arisen from the bosom of our fears, let us acknowledge with the Psalmist, that God is the “ hear-  
“ er of prayer ;” and henceforth, let our  
“ praise wait for him in Sion, and unto



“ him” let us “ perform the vow” of obedience.

It was our hope, my brethren, that on this day of thanksgiving and gratitude, we should have assembled in the House of God with hearts free from every affliction. We hoped that, while we rejoiced in the prosperity of our country, we should have had no feelings of sorrow for Him who is at its head, or, if it was to be our lot to sympathize with him in his parental afflictions, we yet trusted that the service of this day, in which, like the royal Psalmist, he would enjoy the feelings dearest to him, as the Father of his people, would have assuaged his private griefs; and when he thought on the goodness of God, “ dropping fatness on the pastures of the wilderness,” and “ covering the valleys” of his land “ with corn,” we knew that his benevolence and his piety would have swelled

even his *breaking* heart with the transport of patriotic exultation.

It was in such a spirit, that, in the prospect of that heavy loss which has since befallen him, he yet recollected the happiness of his people, and called them together to express his and their gratitude for that Divine goodness which has "crowned the year." The day of this solemn assembling has arrived, and in every church throughout the land, the Hymn of Praise is rising to Heaven! But he, alas! cannot appear at the head of his people, nor be gratified with the sounds of the universal joy.—  
—At no distant period, my brethren, we may remember, that he called us to join him in thanksgiving on another occasion, when, like the King of Israel, looking back upon the long period of his reign, he felt his mind impressed with the sense of that protecting Providence, which,

while surrounding nations have been more tumultuous than the stormy seas, has rendered him for fifty years the guardian of a quiet and loyal people. When we were then offering our grateful praises for the blessings of his paternal reign, we felt our hearts warm with the hope, that his setting sun would be permitted to go down in unclouded brightness.—

“ O thou that hearest prayer,” unto thee we now come, amid the gloom which has suddenly spread around us. To thee he ever directed us to apply in the seasons of sorrow, no less than to acknowledge thy hand in the hour of prosperity. Thou knowest his Piety,—and his care for his people, and if it be thy good pleasure, thou yet canst remove the clouds that darken his benevolent spirit.—But if thou hast otherwise determined, let not the memory of his virtues speedily perish ; fix the throne for

all future generations on the same strong foundations of duty to thee, and of zeal for the public good ; and when that awful hour shall at last arrive, when the voice of flattery and the murmurs of faction shall equally cease, may the tears of a grateful people be accompanied with the firm resolution to preserve in themselves and their children those principles of pious obedience, which they have so long beheld and venerated in their Sovereign !

## DISCOURSE XXIII.

### ON A DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

MATTHEW, vi. 26.

*“ Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow  
“ not, neither do they reap, nor gather  
“ into barns ; yet your Heavenly Father  
“ feedeth them. Are ye not much better  
“ than they ?”*

THERE are various considerations which frequently tend to produce in our minds a distrust in the superintending care of Divine Providence. Sometimes we look upon ourselves as beings of so little va-



lue, that it is not to be supposed our trivial concerns should be objects of the attention of Heaven ; and while it is sufficient that the great frame of nature should be upheld by the power of its Maker, man, it may be thought, is permitted, through the short space of his existence, to follow his own thoughts and his own ways, without any eye to mark, or any hand to guide him. To a supposition of this kind, my brethren, the reply of our Saviour, in the text, is unanswerable ; and it is a very striking circumstance, that in no department of nature is the constant care and vigilance of Almighty wisdom more conspicuous, than in those inferior departments of creation, which we might, at first view, deem unworthy of its superintendence. In the habits and the instincts of the lower animals,—in the means by which they are supported and united together

in society,—in the slightest and most trivial circumstances by which their well-being may be promoted,—we perceive a minuteness of providential design, which is no less wonderful than it is benevolent,—and which at once removes the supposition, that there can be any part of the workmanship of God which he will be inclined to consider as undeserving of his protection.

It is not, however, this humiliating view of our nature which we are most prone to indulge. Man very willingly supposes himself to be a creature of no small importance among the works of the Divine wisdom, and he is rather apt to complain that he is neglected by Providence, than to look upon himself as unworthy of its care. He complains, that, on comparing his condition with that of the inferior creation, he is less watchfully and constantly guided; that he must “sow” before

he “reaps;” that frequently, although he “sows,” he yet does not “reap;” and that often all his happiness is destroyed by accidents the most unlooked for, and which burst upon him while he is least prepared to encounter them. Such are the considerations which sometimes lead us to apprehend, that no Divine Providence superintends human affairs, or, at least, to be as distrustful as if there were none. But, even although all these circumstances were inexplicable, it would yet be wise and pious, my brethren, to listen to the simple reasoning of our Saviour, by which he proves, that, if there is a protecting Providence any where in nature, surely it will not be refused to man; that although its methods of administration may be obscure, yet they *must* exist; and that it is an instance of great want of faith in us to doubt, that the same goodness which feeds “the fowls of the

“ air,” and the same wisdom which clothes “ the lilies of the field,” are not likewise watchful for our benefit.

The very circumstance by which man excels all the lower ranks of being, and in which the bounty of his Creator is most apparent, is that which will be found, on examination, to occasion his greatest misapprehensions respecting the Divine Government. All other creatures act without design on their part, and of consequence they are led simply and directly to execute the designs of God in their creation. These are manifestly designs of the utmost benevolence towards them, and most wisely planned for attaining the object proposed. They are simple, too, and immediately comprehended. From one generation to another, the same unvarying instances of minute contrivance are repeated ; and all the history of their little employments is so



nicely arranged and adjusted, that it is impossible not to perceive the superintending hand by which all their movements are guided. But when we look to the history of human existence, a very different scene presents itself. We here behold a being entering upon action, endowed with much higher capacities. We see him enabled to form his own plans of conduct, and to act from the guidance of his own intelligence. Whatever man performs, he seems to do from his own design, or from the direction of his fellow-creatures, and thus, in the very pre-eminence of his nature above the animal creation, the seeds are laid of the forgetfulness of that Divine bounty, from which this pre-eminence itself, and the opportunities of exerting it, are derived.—When, however, we inquire a little more closely, we shall find both that there is a general Providence superintending



the course of human affairs,—and that every individual is likewise regarded in this great plan of Heaven.

I. When we examine the history of any particular man, it may not, perhaps, be easy to perceive the hand of superior intelligence conducting him. The principles of his conduct are often so capricious, that they seem to lead to no object, or to be guided by no plan; or, when they are steady and determinate, the wisdom which directs him seems to be his own. But, when we look to the general course of human affairs, we then perceive clearly the wisdom of Heaven in their direction. We see certain leading principles of our nature prevailing over the wide extent of the world, and shaping the general outlines of the course of man. Wherever we throw our eyes, we see this busy creature “sowing and

“reaping, and gathering into barns.” We every where see the principles of the social union laying the foundation of the same, or similar forms of polity; and amidst all the irregularity of individuals, the weakness of some, and the ability of others, we see the great fabric of society wisely and harmoniously framed. It is impossible, my brethren, to enter, in this place, widely into such observations; but the general result of all extensive examinations of human affairs, must be a perception of the Supreme wisdom, to which their order and arrangement is to be ascribed; a wisdom which is much more admirable in their conduct, than in the guidance of the lower animals, in as much as they are modelled upon a loftier design, and are yet of a nature more independent and untractable.

II. But it is with man, in his indivi-

dual capacity, that we are chiefly concerned in this argument ; and the leading difficulty which it presents, is to raise in the minds of individuals, the belief that they are the objects of Divine care, and are provided for in the impartial administration of Heaven.—With this view, it is, in the first place, evident, that the Providence of God cannot be expected to counteract the nature and the capacities which he has given us. He has given to every man, more or less, the powers of thought and of exertion ; and it is evidently his intention that these capacities should be exercised. It would not, then, be *providential*, with respect to man, to feed him before “ he sowed and “ reaped, and gathered into his barn.” Thought and design are the peculiar distinctions which elevate him above all other beings ; and, surely, it would be a preposterous constitution of nature, which

should endow him with those lofty faculties, and, at the same time, should supersede the necessity of his using them. The Providence of God, to every individual of the human race, is shewn in rewarding the *right* employment of his powers,—in fixing it as the general rule upon which human life is to be conducted, that, “in like manner as we sow we shall “reap,”—and by affording to every man some means of occupation suited to his faculties, which, in the common course of nature, will bring their reward. It is upon this view, that our Saviour founds the beautiful instruction conveyed in the text. He wishes to convince us that there are *laws* established in nature, in the confidence of which it becomes us to act, without any anxiety respecting the result. These laws are established by wisdom and benevolence, and all that we have to do is to be dili-

gent in observing and acting upon them, with a firm dependence on the great Being by whom they are enacted.

But, in the second place, “they who sow do not always reap,” and this great law of God seems to suffer many interruptions. Yet the Lawgiver himself is steady and immoveable, and when the eye of man has once been elevated to Him, how is it that his faith should for a moment fail? It is in this high strain that our Saviour continues his argument:—“Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek,) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” It is thus that he endeavours to point out to the individuals of the human race, the highest relation in which they stand; to shew



them, that it is not merely the concerns of a lower world to which their thoughts should bend, but that they ought to look up to that Heavenly Father who knoweth their necessities, and that, when they have once discovered this lofty relationship, all their anxieties and distrust ought for ever to be at an end. If the laws of this lower world are not invariable,—if “the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding,”—the design is evidently that we should raise our contemplation to higher laws, and endeavour to discover that part of the administration of God in which there is “no variableness nor shadow of turning.” “Seek ye first,” he concludes, “the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” To the man whose thoughts are elevated to this

contemplation, and who believes that there is a higher kingdom, in which they who have sown the seeds of virtuous obedience, will infallibly reap the harvest of immortality; all doubts concerning the watchful Providence of God are for ever removed; and, while he is going on in the animating course of duty, he feels that the hand of the Almighty is leading him forward, and that, amidst the conflict of mortal disappointments and trials, the shield of heaven is ever held over him, to save him from the violence of their shock.

It is thus that we are farther instructed not to regard the most grievous afflictions which can befall us, as any proofs of the want of providential care on the part of our heavenly Father. How often, on the contrary, does not experience inform us, that to these we must ascribe our greatest im-

provements in religious hope and virtue; and that, when it arises calm and collected from the stroke of adverse fortune, the soul of man assumes its noblest character, and attains the firmest belief of that high destiny which awaits it.

But I will not at present enter farther into these reflections. The result to which they lead is, in the highest degree, consoling and animating. They lead us to feel the utmost security in the course of virtuous occupation; they animate all our labours of duty, by representing them as performed under the care, and with the assistance, of heaven; they give to the good man constant cheerfulness, while he knows that, in his progress through the world, he is ever leaning upon God; and, at those times when his soul is afflicted, they yet inspire the happiest resignation, when he knows that it is a Father who chastises him. To

such impressions, then, my brethren, let your minds be ever accustomed ; seek for them in the hour of prayer ; let your souls be temples in which the presence of God may dwell ; and throw away all those earthly and careful thoughts which obscure to your view the brightness of the Deity.

In a few days another duty will summon us. We are called, amidst the dangers and the distresses of our country, to advance to the footstool of Omnipotence, and to implore its protection and its guidance. To this great service, the noblest in which a Christian nation can be employed, let us advance with hearts duly prepared and enlightened, sensible of that Almighty arm which alone can save, and confident in the wisdom of that hand which alone can direct us.



## DISCOURSE XXIV.

ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WITH RESPECT  
TO NATIONS. \*

MATTHEW, vi. 26.

*“ Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow  
“ not, neither do they reap, nor yet ga-  
“ ther into barns; yet your heavenly  
“ Father feedeth them. Are ye not  
“ much better than they?”*

WHEN we were last met, my brethren, I took occasion, from these words, to submit to you some leading views on the

\* Preached on March 21, 1811, the day of a General Fast.



interesting subject of a Divine Providence. I endeavoured to point out, both in the general aspect of human affairs, and in the laws by which the conduct of individuals is regulated, and on which their success and happiness depends, the traces of a superior wisdom and goodness ; and, as the result of the inquiry, I suggested to you, in the words of our Saviour, those sentiments of trust and confidence in the protection of Heaven, which ought ever to accompany us in all our innocent and virtuous efforts, whatever clouds of danger or misfortune may darken our prospect.

It is with such sentiments, I trust, that we are this day assembled in the house of our heavenly Father. We are now met, not as individuals merely, but as citizens. We are met amidst the perplexities of the country which is dear to us, and have thrown ourselves, with one

accord, before the throne of Omnipotent wisdom, and have sought its inspiration to teach us, what are the grounds of confidence upon which we may repose, and what are the duties which remain for us to perform. In the midst of our fears and our sorrows, we have again heard the simple words of Divine instruction, and have been desired to look no farther than to "the fowls of the air," for the foundation of our assurance, that the interests neither of individuals, nor of nations, will be neglected in the Providence of Heaven.

When I formerly addressed you, I remarked that the hand of God is much more distinctly traced in the general course of human affairs, than in the history of particular men. Men, as individuals, are very much left to their own direction, and their success in this life, and their happiness in another, de-

pend principally upon their own conduct. When we look, however, to nations or communities, it is not difficult to discern an higher wisdom at work than that of the human actors. We there perceive the separate and jarring interests of individuals combining, without their intention, to the general good of the whole ;—we see frequently the deepest designs of human policy ending in folly,—and in the silent course of events, improvements produced on the structure of governments, and on the general aspect of nations, which can seldom be effected by the bold hand of innovation. In all these, and innumerable other particulars, we may trace, in the formation and guidance of nations, a wisdom superior to that of man,—and amidst all their hazards and perplexities, it becomes them, therefore, to look up with confidence and serenity to that mighty Power

which watches over them. It is not the dictate of Superstition,—it is the wisdom of Religion, to believe that *their* stability rests upon firmer foundations than human purposes and designs ; and it is weakness to lose confidence in the powerful arm which upholds them, although they may be assailed by storms from without, or may even betray symptoms of infirmity within.

This is the feeling, my brethren, which men, in a private station, especially, who are not themselves employed in the guidance of public affairs, ought to cherish amidst the dangers of their times. As members of a community, we approach nearer in resemblance to the “ fowls “ of the air,” which owe their support and protection more to Divine benevolence than to their own exertion,—than when we are regarded as individuals merely. Our country is the great tree



under whose foliage we were born and reared, and on whose branches our nests are hung: *we* sowed not the seed from which it sprung, nor poured down the dews of Heaven which nourish it, and we ought not to despond although its lofty top may bend under the tempest, or its decaying boughs drop away. Confidence in the good Providence of God is, then, the true remedy, during the perils and disasters of our country, against all narrow and partial grounds of alarm. It will quiet our apprehensions amidst the menaces of violence and ambition,—under the failure of particular measures of policy,—under the loss of particular leaders or governors. I say not that these are matters of trivial consideration; I say not that it is a circumstance of slight moment for a nation what guides it chooses, or what measures it adopts; but I say, that these are but the means, not the ul-



timate foundations of its safety, and that while it has no reason to apprehend that it has been "weighed in the balances, and "found wanting,"—it is the weakness of impiety to surrender itself to despair.

While in this manner a firm belief in a superintending Providence will, amidst national dangers, remove from us all weak and narrow alarms, it is yet of the utmost importance, that we should form just views upon this subject, so as to avoid the opposite errors of presumption and false confidence. Every good citizen naturally hopes well of his country, and trusts, that in his day the period of its destruction is far distant. Yet, wherever we cast our eyes over the history of past times, we find that the greatest nations have had their hour of ultimate decay, and the most powerful and extensive empires have left at last nothing behind them but the memory of

their names. Some have fallen before the impulse of conquest,—others have given way to internal tumult,—some have at last sunk under the weight of their own corruption,—all have performed their appointed parts, and have then vanished from the stage of the world. Alas! it is not to past history alone that we need now turn for the exhibition of those melancholy tragedies. Nations and empires, which, in our infant days, seemed firmly rooted like “the fir trees” and “the cedars of Lebanon,” have fallen everywhere around us, under “the axe of the feller,” and “the rest of the trees of the forest are few, that a child may write them!”

We must not, however, imagine, that in these awful dispensations the ways of Providence are accidental and capricious. The great law of human life applies likewise to national security. “As men

“sow, they must reap.” It seldom happens that it is external violence alone which executes the awful mandate of destruction. The springs of public and private virtue must be relaxed, before “the walls  
“of a nation shall shake at the noise of  
“the horsemen, and of the wheels and  
“of the chariots, when a conqueror shall  
“enter into her gates,” before she is  
“cast out as profane from the mountain  
“of God,” and “the anointed cherub,” that guardeth her, is removed. If, then, my brethren, amidst external or incidental causes of alarm, the good citizen will not permit his hopes of security to be shaken,—he will yet tremble if he discovers around him the traces of corruption, of selfishness, and of impiety. If these plague-spots are spreading wide over the community,—if public virtue is gone, and licentiousness is debasing the purity of private manners; if these evils

proceed in their course, then, in the justice of Heaven, punishment will sooner or later overtake them: the long-suffering of God may be slow to avenge,—but the vengeance will at last come,—and the empire which is founded on these slippery sands, whatever honours it may have won, or however wide its bulwarks may extend, when “the rain at last descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon it,” must fall, and all its former grandeur will only add to the vastness of its ruins.

Such seem to be the leading views which, upon this great subject, ought to regulate our confidence and our hopes. We see, in the rise and progress of nations, a provident wisdom, upon which it becomes us to rely in the hours of their danger, and not to give way to every incidental alarm. But we see, likewise, that the great law prescribed to them is the



same with that on which the prosperity of individuals is founded, that they must stand upon their exertion and their virtue, and that when they sink into degradation and corruption, their ultimate overthrow will mark the impartial justice of the Divine administration.

From these general reflections, I am led, by the particular occasion which has assembled us this day, to observe that there is not, in the whole history of mankind, an instance so conspicuous of the hand of Heaven guiding and protecting a nation, as that of our own country exhibits. When we compare the slight beginnings from which we arose, when we were a barbarous tribe, scarcely known to adventurous voyagers, with that national dignity and dominion which now renders us feared and honoured, even in the most distant climes ;—when we look back upon the intermediate period, and trace the



slow but steady and progressive steps by which our civil and religious institutions have attained the highest perfection hitherto known among men, surely, my brethren, we cannot but feel the power and the goodness of Him under the shelter of whose wing we have been fostered ; and whatever dangers may now assail us, we shall not, I trust, readily forego our confidence in him, nor too easily fear that that arm which has so often saved, will not continue to cover us with its shield.

Yet, while such are our hopes and our confidence, let us not forget our duties. Let us remember that while Heaven protects and guides them, nations must exert their own wisdom and their own virtue, and that the rewards of the brave and of the good will not be lavished on the slothful or on the licentious. While the power of God is manifest in the progress

of our nation, and in the glory which it has attained, we must not yet forget that the virtues of our Fathers merited the blessings which they won. Our civil constitution was the bright reward bestowed upon their patriotic exertions; nor are we to think that it will be preserved entire if their sons should be feeble and degenerate. The fabric of our church was built by holy hands; its stones were cemented with the blood of martyrs; and we must not dream that it will continue to shelter us from the storms of time, and to train us in the discipline of eternity, unless we, too, like the Fathers from whom we sprung, gather around it with pious affection. These are the lofty considerations, my brethren, to which our thoughts ought, in these hours of trial, to be turned,—the great considerations of public and private virtue.

It is not that we want *courage* to de-

fend the blessings which we possess ! It is not external violence that need appal us ! No : on *this* day, at least, it would be weakness to suppose it : *this* \* day, which, in its yearly return, brings the memory of that proud triumph when, on a distant shore, perhaps at the very hour in which we are now imploring the aid of the God of battles, the hardy sons of our mountains broke the *invincible* legions of the foe, and the veteran Hero who led them on fell amidst the shouts of victory ! It is not courage that we want. The same ennobling scenes have since been repeated upon the decks of our ships, and in many a foreign field ; and there is not, perhaps, in the whole history of our country a period that has been marked by greater instances of heroic, and

\* An allusion to the battle of Alexandria, fought on 21st March 1801.

devoted valour.—Neither need we apprehend the want of *counsel* in our rulers. Alas ! if we have causes of alarm, (and, when we are humbling ourselves beneath the hand of God, it would be presumptuous to say that there are none,) we must go deeper to look for them. We must seek them in that public corruption which prefers selfish interest to the general good. We must seek them in that licentiousness of manners which, beginning with the great, spreads its contagion among the low. We must seek for them in the effects of long prosperity, which, notwithstanding the most impressive warnings, continues, I fear, to blind us, and to hide from our eyes the very hand from which it flows.

If these are the enemies whom we have most occasion to dread, then, in the name of Heaven, let us go to our own breasts and manfully expel them thence!—

And now, committing ourselves and our country to the care of our heavenly Father, in the humble trust that He who feedeth “the fowls of the air” will not desert us in our necessities ;—let us, with one accord, pray that wherever over this land his people have this day been gathered before him, they may so have repented them of their sins, and formed such firm resolutions of amendment, that they may not, in the hour of trial, be found unworthy of his protection.



## DISCOURSE XXV.

ON THE STABILITY OF THE DIVINE, CONTRASTED WITH THE INSTABILITY OF HUMAN POWER. \*

PSALMS, lxii. 11.

*“ God hath spoken once ; twice have I  
“ heard this, that power belongeth unto  
“ God.”*

FROM the wise order and arrangement of the universe, we become acquainted with the intelligent mind which presides over it ; and besides the feelings of trust and

\* This Sermon (a very hasty and imperfect composition) is introduced here chiefly because it happened to be written and preached while Bonaparte was at Moscow.

dependence with which we are naturally disposed to regard a Superior Being, the many intimations of a benevolent character in nature, lead us to repose with confidence in the goodness of the Deity. The attribute ascribed to him in the text, is of a more awful nature, and would be apt to inspire sentiments merely of humiliation or alarm, were it not for that wisdom and goodness in subservience to which it acts. In that aspect, the contemplation of the Divine power, while it is a noble exercise for the mind, strengthens the trust which we place in God; and although it is an alarming consideration to the wicked, it is full of consolation to the good.

The power of God is, in the first place, made evident from the magnificence of the world around us. If the arrangements which we observe in nature give us assurance of the Divine intelligence, and the

benevolence of these arrangements makes us acquainted with his goodness, the very existence of Creation is a proof of his power,—since nothing but a power, the extent of which is beyond our conception, could have given birth to so glorious an order of being. In conformity with our natural notions of the extent of this power, Holy Scripture always speaks of it. It is described in one view, as instantaneous in its operations. “God said, Let there  
“be light, and there was light!” “By the  
“word of the Lord were the heavens made,  
“and all the host of them by the breath of  
“his mouth: he spake, and it was done;  
“he commanded, and it stood fast.” Further, it is described as extending throughout all nature. “He hath made the  
“earth by his power; he hath establish-  
“ed the world by his wisdom; and hath  
“stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice,

“there is a multitude of waters in the  
“heavens, and he causeth the vapours  
“to ascend from the ends of the earth :  
“he maketh lightnings with rain, and  
“bringeth forth the wind out of his trea-  
“sures.”

The same power which is thus portrayed as giving existence to creation, and as regulating the operations of nature, is likewise still more awfully exhibited in the destruction of the works which it has formed. “I beheld the earth,” says the Prophet Jeremiah, “and lo ! it was without form and void ; and the heavens, “and they had no light. I beheld the “mountains, and lo ! they trembled ; and “all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, “and lo ! there was no man, and all the “birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo ! the fruitful place was a “wilderness ; and all the cities thereof “were broken down at the presence of

“the Lord, and by his fierce anger.” In these, and many other passages of Scripture, the loftiest views are held out to us of this uncontrollable power ; and there are no passages, perhaps, throughout the Sacred Volume, that are so strikingly sublime.

The power of God is, however, in the second place, more affectingly demonstrated to us, when it is contrasted with our own weakness. We know that we are ourselves destined to live for a few years only upon this earth. When we ask for our fathers, and those of the old time before them, we find that they have departed from this busy scene ; and that all the activity and energy which they displayed in their day, are now buried with them in the grave. We are, in our turn, carrying on the same, or similar occupations. Every where around us we see the world in wide commotion,—the bloody trage-



dies of nations played over again before us,—when, let but a few years pass, and all the actors and spectators of these awful scenes will alike be mouldering in the clay. But although man is blotted out from creation, and they whose ambition would almost burst the boundaries of the globe, are at last confined within a little urn,—in this wreck of human glory, the silent majesty of nature goes on without pause or decay ;—the sun “ will  
“ come forth from his chamber, and rejoice as a strong man to run a race,” when the feet of generations yet unborn are walking over the dust of our bones ;—and the wind will sweep with equal unconcern over the tombs of conquerors, and the grassy turf of the poor !

From such reflections we are made to feel the greatness of that power before which every thing human vanishes away, and it is from this contrast that the pro-

phet Isaiah derives his most impressive pictures of the omnipotence of God :—  
“ Who,” says he, “ hath measured the  
“ waters in the hollow of his hand, and  
“ meted out heaven with the span, and  
“ comprehended the dust of the earth in  
“ a measure, and weighed the mountains  
“ in scales, and the hills in a balance ?  
“ Who hath directed the spirit of the  
“ Lord, or being his counsellor, hath  
“ taught him ? Behold the nations are  
“ as a drop of a bucket, and are count-  
“ ed as the small dust of the balance :  
“ behold he taketh up the isles as a very  
“ little thing. All nations before him  
“ are as nothing, and they are counted  
“ to him less than nothing and vanity.  
“ It is he that sitteth upon the circle of  
“ the earth, and the inhabitants thereof  
“ are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth  
“ out the heavens as a curtain, and spread-  
“ eth them out as a tent to dwell in : that

“bringeth the princes to nothing: he  
“maketh the judges of the earth as vanity: he shall blow upon them, and they  
“shall wither, and the whirlwind shall  
“take them away as stubble. To whom,  
“then; will ye liken me, or shall I be  
“equal, saith the Holy One? Lift up  
“your eyes on high, and behold, who  
“hath created these things, that bring-  
“eth out their host by number,—that  
“calleth all by names, by the greatness  
“of his might not one faileth.”

The first reflection, my brethren, to which this contemplation leads us, respects the consolation which good men may derive from it in the worst circumstances of external fortune. The benevolence and loving-kindness of the Divine nature is the tenet which, of all others, the good are most ready to embrace. What consolation, therefore, in the farther reflection that the power of God is

equally extensive with his goodness, and that if, for the moment, he seems to abandon them, it is not that he is unable to effect their deliverance, but only that he is desirous to make a trial of their faith. To this effect the Prophet continues, in the words immediately following those which I have now quoted, and thus deduces from his description of the Divine power the most consolatory assurances to the good and pious mind: “ Why sayest thou, O  
“ Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is  
“ hid from the Lord, and my judgment  
“ is passed over from my God? Hast  
“ thou not known, hast thou not heard,  
“ that the everlasting God, the Lord, the  
“ creator of the ends of the earth, faint-  
“ eth not, neither is weary? there is no  
“ searching of his understanding. He  
“ giveth power to the faint, and to them  
“ that have no might he increaseth  
“ strength. Even the youths shall faint

“ and be weary, and the young men shall  
“ utterly fall : But they that wait upon  
“ the Lord shall renew their strength :  
“ they shall mount up with wings as  
“ eagles, they shall run and not be weary,  
“ and they shall walk and not faint.”

A second reflection from the same lofty contemplation, proves to us the unstable condition of those who oppose the laws of God and of goodness. Their triumph, however great it may sometimes apparently be, is only for a time ; there is a power which they must yet encounter, before which they can never stand ; and which even *now*, in the midst of their greatest prosperity, calls to them, in the secret of their hearts, and says, “ thou hast trusted  
“ in thy wickedness ; thou hast said, none  
“ seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy know-  
“ ledge, it hath perverted thee, and thou  
“ hast said in thine heart, I am, and none  
“ else besides me : therefore shall evil



“ come upon thee, thou shalt not know  
“ from whence it riseth ; and mischief  
“ shall fall upon thee, thou shalt not  
“ be able to put it off ; and desolation  
“ shall come upon thee suddenly !”

These are the prophetic denunciations which ever hang over the wicked man, and which, speaking in the voice of conscience, inflict a sting upon him that all the smiles of fortune, and all the flatteries of the world, would in vain seek to assuage.

Such, my brethren, seem to be the leading reflections which we may derive from this great contemplation, and surely they are powerful ones to incline us to adopt that good part which shall not be taken from us, and to avoid every evil way. In the Gospel, the final consummation of the Divine plan is disclosed to us. There we see the power of God calling the dead into life, and all the inhabitants of the

tombs rising from their slumbers at his command, and receiving their ultimate doom. To that day, so encouraging to the hopes, and so alarming to the weakness of our nature, that day on which, indeed, “ God shall speak once, and twice “ shall we hear this, that power belongeth “ unto God ;”—let us look forward with holy resolution, “ pressing on to the mark “ of our high calling, and putting our “ trust in one who is mighty to save,” that when we “ awake from the dust of “ the earth,” it may not be to “ shame “ and everlasting contempt,” but that we “ may shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and “ ever.”

## DISCOURSE XXVI.

ON NATIONAL PRESUMPTION AND DESPONDENCY.\*

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MARK, xiii. 7.

*“ And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled ;  
“ for such things must needs be ; but  
“ the end shall not be yet.”*

THESE words, my brethren, form a part of our Lord's wonderful prediction concerning the fall of Jerusalem,—a predic-

\* Preached on 11th March 1813, the day of a General Fast.

tion fulfilled in so many minute particulars, that we cannot but regard it as a very striking proof of his Divine authority. It is in this view, indeed, that it is now chiefly valuable. Yet our Lord constantly mingles general instruction with his allusions to the most particular incidents,—and perhaps on this day, when we are called to contemplate, not the history of former ages, but the events of our own times, inferior to none in magnitude and in awful consequences, it may be wise in us to sit down with Him and his disciples, on the Mount of sacred Meditation, and, while we gaze with anxious eyes upon the Temple of our Country, to listen to his words of admonition, and to inquire into “the signs of the times.”

If I am not much mistaken, there is in the opening of this prophecy a view of human nature, and of events not inap-

plicable to what we have seen in our own day. “As he went out of the temple, “one of his disciples,” we are told, “saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And, as he sate upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them, began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such



“ things must needs be ; but the end  
“ shall not be yet.”

In the *first* place, my brethren, the observation of the disciples upon the strength and magnificence of their temple, represents that natural confidence which all men are disposed to place in the stability of their national institutions. In the course of ages, nations forget the insignificance of their origin, and the struggles which they have made in their progress ; when their political system at home has been fully adjusted, and their foreign relations have been struck deep, especially when they have long taken a lead in the transactions of the world, they begin to regard themselves as forming a necessary part of the system of the universe, and seem almost as secure and independent of change as the sun in the heavens. This sentiment, as it is natural, must not be judged of with too great

severity ; yet we may sometimes trace in it the beginnings of national decline ; and when, in the pride of their hearts, a people are saying, “ See what manner of “ stones, and what buildings are here ! ” The voice of wisdom may too often find occasion to reply, “ Seest thou these “ great buildings ? There shall not be left “ one stone upon another that shall not “ be thrown down.”

There is surely no necessity to go back far in the history of the world for an illustration of this striking truth. In our own recollection, the feeling expressed in this passage of Scripture by our Lord’s disciples was prevalent, I suppose, throughout all the nations of Europe. They all seemed to be firmly established upon the basis of their ancient institutions ; and where was there a country in which the citizen would not point with exultation to the fabric which his fathers

had reared, and say, in the triumphant language of the disciples, “ See what manner of stones, and what buildings are here !” Not only in this favoured land, in which, blessed be God ! the throne of kings still stands secure in the Temple of Public Freedom, but, under every variety of government and law, the same supposition of stability prevailed, and although, in “ the signs of the times,” the wise might perhaps read the characters of impending evil, who would have dared to predict that complete destruction which has in so many instances occurred ? To foretell what we have seen, that, in many of those proud buildings there would “ not be left one stone upon another which should not be thrown down ;”—or, with the Prophet Isaiah, to paint what our eyes have beheld, that “ the Lord would make the earth empty, and turn it up-

“ side down, and scatter abroad the inhabitants thereof ;—that it would be, as  
“ with the people so with the priest ; as  
“ with the servant so with his master ; as  
“ with the maid so with her mistress ;”—  
that “ the land should be utterly emptied  
“ and utterly spoiled, and that the haughty people of the earth should languish ?”  
These things we have in more than one instance ourselves witnessed, and the ruins which so widely surround us, may surely prove to us the fallacy of any presumptuous confidence in the stability of national power.

Indeed, so rapid and appalling have been these changes, that a sentiment, the reverse of confidence, had become, perhaps, but too prevalent in the public mind ; and it is not surprising that, in the universal wreck of ancient institutions, men should have begun to give up all hope of any brighter prospects ;



and that now, instead of being secure of a continued prosperity, they should too readily have predicted the immediate downfall of every thing that was dear to them. Such, too, we may, in the *second* place, remark, is the feeling which our Lord saw would succeed in the minds of his disciples, to their former unreasonable security. He saw that, in the feebleness of despondency, they would become the dupes of imposture, and would construe every "rumour of war," and even the accidental convulsions of nature themselves, into the signs of their approaching destruction. It is in this view that he endeavours to strengthen their souls against those weakening delusions, by warning them to take heed, lest any man should deceive them; lest they should be seduced by "false Christs and false Prophets," or misled by their signs or wonders; and he assures them



“that nation should rise against nation,” and “earthquakes and famines would be “in divers places;” but that these were only “the beginnings of sorrows, and “that the end was not yet.”—There cannot be a doubt, my brethren, that a great part of the disasters, which, in our time, have come upon the world, has arisen from the indulgence of that feebleness of spirit, against which our Lord here warns his disciples. When men had lost that presumption, which had no foundation in reason, they gave themselves up to as irrational a spirit of despondency: they permitted a “MAN to deceive them;”—that “false prophet” who has so long announced himself as the anointed minister of Heaven,—the destined ruler of the universal world,—found too much credit to all his extravagant assumptions,—and dazzled and confounded by the splendour of successful am-

bition, too many of the nations basely yielded to the seduction of “ his signs and wonders.”

It was in this temper that the world generally appeared around us, when, but a year ago, we were assembled, as at this time, to implore the protection of Heaven. To the former period of false security had succeeded a long period of disaster and dismay : conquest had continued to make its unresisted progress ; and day after day was still bringing the melancholy relation of thrones subverted, and nations subdued. The hour of universal destruction was but too commonly predicted ; and while men looked upon the venerable fabrics of their country with the eye of feebleness and despondency, rather than with the animation of patriotism, they were gloomily occupied with the presages of evil, and said to themselves, “ there shall not,

“ alas ! be left one stone upon another  
“ that shall not be thrown down.”

It was in the midst of these dark thoughts that we again “ heard of wars, and rumours of wars, and were troubled.” We imagined, with too much alarm, that the destiny of other empires was at hand : we scarcely hoped to see greater resolution than had yet appeared in the rulers of nations, or greater self-devotion in their people ; and we despaired to find one people who should “ endure to the end, and be saved.” A *third* period has since opened upon us, in which we *have* seen that splendid and animating spectacle,—the spectacle of a Prince and a People who would stoop to no base submission,—not “ though the abomination of desolation stood where it ought not,”—amid the ruins of their city, and “ in their holy place ;”—who, though they “ left their houses without entering therein

“ to take any thing out, and went into the  
“ fields without turning back again for their  
“ garments,”—yet turned back again in  
arms, and drove before them that “ false  
“ prophet,”—and have brought contempt  
upon all his “ lying wonders.”

It is impossible, my brethren, to speak  
of this proud triumph in language adequate to its magnificence ;—yet it is suitable to this place to feel, that if man did much, God did more ;—ever to recollect, with shuddering devotion,—that the flight of these oppressors was “ in the winter,”  
—that “ affliction fell upon them, such as  
“ was not from the beginning of the crea-  
“ tion, which God created, unto this  
“ day ;”—that although they had “ rush-  
“ ed like the rushing of many waters,  
“ yet God rebuked them, and they fled  
“ afar off, and were chased as the chaff of  
“ the mountains before the wind, and like  
“ a rolling thing before the whirlwind ;—



“and behold, at evening-tide, trouble,—  
“and before the morning they were  
“not!”

Amid the glory of this mighty scene, and the glowing hopes which it awakens, it is pious, no less than natural, to give way to our feelings of gratitude and exultation. It is pious, too, from the hopes which it inspires, to feel the value of our Lord's admonition in the text,—that it is not every rumour of war which ought to trouble us,—that nations are destined to pass through many a storm of peril,—and that, even when the clouds are thickest around them, the light of their fairest prospects may, at that moment, in the bounty of Heaven, be preparing to open. “Such things must needs be; “but the end shall not be yet.” Farther, it is wise, from the experience of these latter days, to feel that it is not the external circumstances of na-



tions which are chiefly alarming ; that, while there is resolution at home, the greatest hazards may be encountered abroad ; that God will not desert those who do not desert themselves ; and that no peril is so great or so portentous, as weak and debasing submission. It is wise, no less than magnanimous, from the splendid page of recent history, to imbibe that lofty character of mind, which cannot be lightly troubled ; which will not sink before every menace of evil ; but in the very jaws of apparent destruction, can carry that firm and collected spirit, which is ready to catch the first moment of recovery.

But, while this great example points out to us the miracles which national firmness can effect, those scenes which we before witnessed, as distinctly prove to us, the miserable consequences of national divisions, and pusillanimity and

irresolution ; and if we go back to the beginning of those fatal convulsions which have torn and mangled all the texture of society around us, we shall then see the dangers of which, indeed, we have cause to beware ;—those pestilences and “ earthquakes ” of the moral world, which are truly “ the beginning of sorrows ; ” and which, far more than “ wars, and rumours of wars,” may call upon us to be troubled, and to take heed to ourselves. We shall see those disorders originate in the thoughtless profligacy of the great ; in the discontented turbulence of the people ; in the general neglect of religious duties ; in that narrow and overwhelming selfishness, which cannot look beyond immediate gratification ; which can feel no ardour of Patriotism ; nor be touched by any fire from Heaven !

These are, in truth, the irresistible enemies of nations ;—where these assail, no

“ great buildings, and no manner of stones,” will be able to defend ;—these were the enemies, much more than the armies of Rome, which overthrew the temple and the state of Jerusalem of old ;—and they are the very same, whose progress, in every country around us, has in our time been marked with tracks of blood and desolation ;—and has left thrones, and dominions, and principalities and powers, one undistinguished mass of degradation and ruin.

If these are still the signs of our times, my brethren ; if the judgments of God in the earth have not yet awakened us to thought, and religion, and duty ; if,—what I trust in Him cannot generally be said of us,—in public life, we are without zeal for our country, and in private, are without love to God and to our neighbour ; then let us not be deceived, as so many other nations have

been, with vain dreams of pre-eminence and power. Let us not even surrender our minds too hastily to those bright gleams of hope which have now at length opened upon the world ;—but if we would really see that “ shining light” of freedom and restoration “ shining more “ and more unto the perfect day ;”—then, ere we leave the meditations of the Temple, and while we yet stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, let us once more reverently hear, and solemnly vow to observe, the word of the Lord. “ Thus “ saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of “ Israel, Amend your ways and your do- “ ings, and I will cause you to dwell in “ this place. Trust ye not in lying words, “ saying, the Temple of the Lord, the “ Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the “ Lord are these. For, if ye thorough- “ ly amend your ways and your doings ; “ if ye thoroughly execute judgment be-

“ tween a man and his neighbour ; if ye  
“ oppress not the stranger, the fatherless,  
“ and the widow, and shed not innocent  
“ blood in this place, neither walk after  
“ other Gods to your hurt ; then will I  
“ cause you to dwell in this place, in the  
“ land that I gave to your fathers, for  
“ ever and ever.”



## DISCOURSE XXVII.

ON THE GOOD NAME OF THE DEAD. \*

ECCLESIASTES, vii. 1.

*“ A good name is better than precious ointment ; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.”*

THERE seems, my brethren, at first view, to be something very extraordinary in the latter part of this assertion of the wise man. The day of the birth of man has, at all times, been esteemed a day of rejoicing. It is the day on which the

\* Preached on July 2, 1815, the second Sunday after the Battle of Waterloo.

wishes of parents are accomplished, and when the mother “remembereth no more her anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” It is a day on which innumerable hopes are formed, that carry forward the imagination into many pleasing anticipations of the future,—hopes, which are only clung to with the greater eagerness, from the feeling of their precariousness and uncertainty.

The day of death, on the other hand, is, we all know, a day of lamentation and mourning. When the buds of infancy are blighted, the tears of parents fall over the failure of all their hopes ;—when the strength or beauty of maturer years is cut down, how many heart-rending sorrows are awakened and widely diffused ;—and even when the hoary head descends to the grave, covered with honour, and in the serenity of its setting radiance,—how painful to part with that

cheerful affection which had so long smoothed, or that experienced wisdom which had guided through the perplexed paths of human existence!

These, my brethren, are the feelings of nature, and her voice is ever sacred! Yet there is a greater voice, which springs from the meditations of wisdom and religion,—there is a light of glory which surrounds the grave,—that last retreat of mortal man is not left in the obscurity of its native horrors,—and even amidst the pangs and afflictions of suffering nature itself, there is a triumph and a consolation which may be heard!

“The day of death,” says the wise man, “is better than the day of one’s birth.” In the first and simplest view of this assertion, death may be considered as the termination of all the trials and conflicts of human nature. It is the hour of calm after the storm—the day of peace

after the tumult of the battle. If, in the silent “valley of the shadow of death,” the joys and hopes of man are not to be found, neither are his anxieties and cares, —the pulse of passion has there ceased to beat,—and all the sorrows that distract, and the disorders that lay waste his soul, are hushed in an eternal repose. “There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.”

There is, in this view of the tranquillity of the grave, something which is congenial to every gentle mind. We love, in the hours of thought, to retire from the tumultuous gaiety of the world, or from its scenes of horror and sorrow, and to meditate amid the quiet mansions of mortality; and while the evening sun shines upon the turf that covers them, to feel the conflicts of our own bosoms gradually subside into the calm of nature, and of the tomb! When we think of the

dead, we think of those whose task is done,—who, after a long day of labour, are now laid quietly asleep,—and whose slumbers will not be broken by the restless feet that are treading around them. Is there anything in the toils and perplexities of that busy multitude, so soothing to the imagination, as the hallowed repose of those who have quitted the distracted scene ; and when we contemplate the birth of man into a world so fluctuating and uncertain, in which, alas ! the human character itself is subject to the same fatal mutability and disorder,—can we, in reason, regard it as a happier event, than that sacred stroke of destiny which at once closes for ever all the course of his sorrows and his temptations ?

Let us not then, my brethren, on any occasion, mourn over the dead on *their* account ;—let us not imagine that they have met with any loss or privation. To



us their departure may, indeed, be grievous ; but the woe is unmanly that centres solely in itself, and it is, in truth, the illusion that the dead have met with a heavy misfortune, which occasions our severest pangs when we lament their destiny. When infant innocence is cut off, we mourn that so happy an existence should so suddenly terminate,—forgetful that those joyous years would soon be clouded by the gathering anxieties of human life ! We mourn over the fall of youth in the pride of its bloom and of its hopes,—unmindful of the decay and disappointments which are the too certain attendants of increasing age ! We mourn for the aged themselves, although, probably, the few years which might have been added to their being would have taken away more than they could bring ! The truth is, the shortest life gives us a taste of the happiness of existence, and the most

protracted period of our being gives us little more. The speediest death prevents the repetition, merely, of the same, or a few similar enjoyments, but kindly cuts off, at the same time, the possibility of evils and disorders which too often sting and wound the very vitals of the soul.

The observation of the wise man ought, however, in the second place, to be viewed in connection with the words by which he introduces it. “A good name,” he says, “is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” In these words he alludes to that important truth which has gained the assent of the good and wise in every age,—that life is only truly valuable, as it opens a theatre for the discharge of duty ;—that it is not to be prized by the number of years to which it extends,—the number of enjoyments which may be crowded into it,—or the

magnificence and glory which may distinguish it,—but by the genuine esteem and love which it acquires in its course ; and that the “ precious ointment ” which embalms the dead, is the “ goodname ” which follows them. This it is, indeed, for which alone a wise man would be desirous to live, and when this invaluable prize is obtained, wherefore should he refuse to die ?

In this view, there can be no doubt that “ the day of death is better than the “ day of one’s birth.”—When a man is born into the world, it cannot be known what may be the character of his course. The helplessness and innocence of childhood are equally the beginnings of every human career ; but how wide the distinctions which arise in the progress of life,—how lamentable even at times the termination of those who, for a season, seemed to offer the fairest promises of

virtue ; and can there, in fact, be an hour of man more enviable than that in which he sinks into the bosom of his mother earth, amid the genuine tears of sorrowing friends, and the universal regrets of human kind ? That great hour is the consummation of his moral being, the seal affixed to the character of his soul, which no future hour can efface or take away ;—he has then for ever escaped, not merely from the fluctuations of the world, but from the mutability of human nature itself,—and there is now no hazard that he will ever awaken, in the breast of a fellow-creature, any other emotions than those of gratitude and love. In that hallowed hour, even his failings are forgotten ; nothing remains of him in our memories but the qualities which we honoured and loved ; and the common imperfections of his mortal nature seem to vanish amid the dust in which he is laid.

Weep not for the dead, then, my brethren, if the light of virtue has followed them to the tomb,—if the memory of their “good name” lives sacred in the heart of man,—O weep not for them,—weep for yourselves and your children! Weep over the stains which continue to defile your nature, and over all the trials and dangers through which the steps of the living are destined to go; but wish not to recal the virtuous dead, whose good name is for ever sealed;—seek not to recal them again into the midst of these trials and defilements;—wish not, for any happiness which you might derive from their virtues, to break the hallowed security of their repose; and if their *last* hour hath likewise been their most glorious,—if it hath called down upon their heads the tears and blessings of their Country, no less than of their friends,—what more could life have offered them, and what



have they lost, that was valuable in existence, even although they may have fallen in the prime of their years?

These are the lofty considerations which, in every age, have presented themselves to the contemplative and wise. They brightened even the darkness of Heathen times, and they formed the noblest examples of heroism and of patriotism even among those whose eyes scarcely penetrated beyond the barrier of the grave. In those illustrious ages, amidst all the obscurity which surrounded them, death was *felt* to be beautiful, “when earned by virtue;” and the parent could resign his son, almost without a sigh, when he fell a sacrifice upon the altar of his country.

The milder genius of the Gospel, my brethren, checks not the feelings of human nature: “Jesus wept,”—and the sacred fountains of sorrow flow for the purification of the soul. But that Gospel,

which represses not the tears of humanity, lights up the radiance of hope in the eyes from which they fall ; it draws the veil of mortality aside, and points to the glories of that region into which the immortal spirit enters. Standing on the holy elevation of the cross of Christ, we now behold the clouds roll away from the valley of the shadow of death ;—we see opening beyond them, the innumerable mansions of the virtuous, and, washed from all their earthly stains, in the blood which streamed for their redemption, we see them prepared to enter into the joy of their Lord.

This great view, then, gives us, in the third place, a ground for the wise man's assertion, which was not fully known to himself, but which, blessed be God, is revealed to the humblest Christian. Yet we do not, perhaps, always permit ourselves to derive from these grand disco-

veries, all the consolation and triumph which they were designed to bestow ; and we are apt at times to suffer the limited notions and prejudices of man to cross, with their narrow boundaries, the interminable prospects of the bounty of God. “ In my Father’s house,” says our Saviour, “ are many mansions,”—mansions, we may dare to interpret, in which the innocent buds of childhood will open beneath the beams of angel love ;—mansions, in which the zeal and affection of youth will be associated with those ministering spirits who carry through unnumbered worlds, the messages of mercy ;—mansions, in which the pious wisdom of age will meditate by the still waters of immortal bliss, on all the gracious plans of Almighty beneficence ! .

And are there no mansions of glory allotted to the generous lovers, and the brave defenders of their country ? Will

the blood which flowed for the liberties of the world, sink into the ground without its reward? Has Heaven no offices in store which *heroic* spirits will delight to exercise? And may it not still be their lofty department, to fan the fires of patriot daring, or to hurl the unseen bolts of vengeance at the heads of the impious oppressors of mankind?—The simplicity of the Gospel checks, indeed, upon this, as upon all religious inquiries, the wanderings of imagination; but it is enough that the mighty prospect is revealed, and revealed in all the unlimited grandeur of the conception,—free from the littleness of human distinctions.

If the day of death, then, is the day of a *new* birth to every virtuous soul,—of a birth into a world where it is for ever cleansed from all the stains and imperfections of mortality,—where all its good and elevated endowments will be crowned

with unfading wreaths, and all its capacities meet with employment far above everything which this world esteems glorious:—is it not the selfishness of grief which would long for its return?—and ought not the “sweet-smelling savour” of “a good name” which it leaves behind, to remain in our hearts as the precious pledge of that life of immortality into which it is gone?

Reflections of this kind, my brethren, are at all times important and consolatory; but I will not conceal from you, that I have been led at present into this train of thought, very much by the great events of these last days; and although I feel it to be presumptuous in me, in these moments of deep agitation, to make any allusion to those unexampled exploits, which, while they have elevated our Country to her highest pinnacle of success and glory, have, at the same time,



involved her in a cloud of heavy sorrow,—I could not refrain from lending even my feeble efforts to dispel the thickness of the gloom !

“ How are the mighty fallen, and the  
“ weapons of war perished !” Yet blessed was the cause in which they fell, and proud and permanent the triumph which their dauntless intrepidity has won ! They fell in the greatest, and, I trust, the last conflict for the independence of the civilized world ; and God hath granted to their heroic toils a far more splendid issue than even the warmest hopes of patriotism had dared to presage. Their names will ever remain inscribed on the pillar of their Country’s renown ; the eyes of liberated Europe will long turn with tears of gratitude to the field on which they bled ; and the father, in many a distant land, will speak to his children of their deeds and of their

fame, as the noblest example and incitement of virtue !

In hours like the present, my brethren, it becomes us to lift the character of our souls to the level of that majestic height on which our Country stands, and to the still higher level of the Gospel. It becomes us to dissipate private sorrow in public triumph, and in the triumph of greater things beyond mortality !

And now, may that Almighty God, who strengthened the arms of our warriors on the day of battle, and crowned their efforts with glorious victory, grant that the memory of their "good name" may fire, as incense from the altar, the hearts of our children in every succeeding age ; and may he speedily close the wounds of private affection, by the animating spectacle of national security and

dignity won by their blood, and by all the triumphant hopes and consolations of Religion !

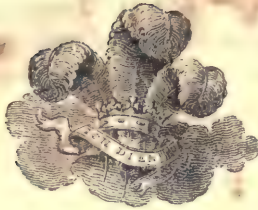
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